Marxism Today

November 1986 95p

Labour's Economic Strategy

Women in the Mainstream

1956 – An Interview with Eric Hobsbawm

Pat Phoenix

Nigel Mansell

The US Elections

Victoria Wood

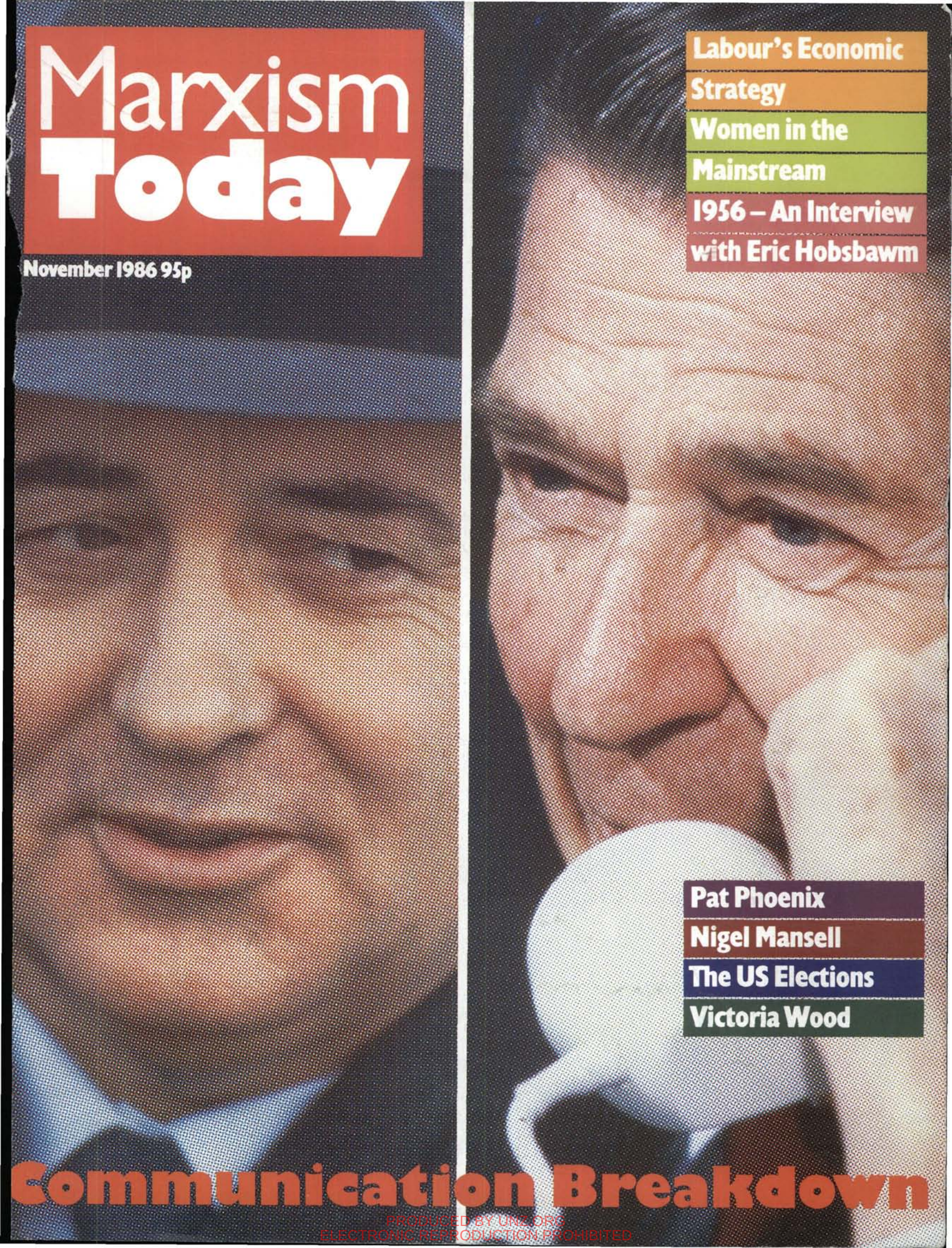

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Photo: Mike Abrahams/Network

Under the nuclear wing – removing US air force personnel will shatter the special relationship

Labour Facing Flak

'What is the benefit to Britain of removing these missiles . . .? I can't see any . . . I can see only heavy losses . . .' With these delib-erately chosen words on Panorama TV, US Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger launched his pre-emptive strike against Labour's non-nuclear defence policy. In the same week, his assistant Richard Perle fired his own broadside against Labour's plans to remove cruise missiles and US nuclear bases from British soil. In case this old 'one-two' hadn't sunk in, Mr Price, US ambassador to Britain, swiftly assured the British public that these views were fully representative of the Reagan administration.

Following Washington's green light, it was open season on Labour's defence policy. George Younger broke his anonymity at the Ministry of Defence; top military brass expressed their dismay; and most of the national press vented their spleen. Only David Owen remained unusually quiet, his expressed desire 'to go for Labour's jugular' on defence momentarily tempered by the Liberal Assembly vote for a non-nuclear Europe. In one brief week Labour and the peace movement had got a taste of things to come. With Thatcherism running out of steam but the memory of their 1983 election Exocets on Labour still strong, defence is clearly an issue the Right are eager to seize upon.

How will Labour cope? The omens are more promising than last time. The party is united around its policy. Its commitment to strong, conventional defence makes it less vulnerable to the charge of leaving the country defenceless. And its assertion of the sovereignty of the British electorate to decide the country's defence policy allows it to play a democratic, patriotic card against excessive US interference. The policy has involved compromises by both Right and Left and there is clearly an earnest desire to avoid a repeat of 1983's exercise in self-destruction.

The broader sweep of public opinion is also more receptive to a non-nuclear policy. The catastrophe at Chernobyl brought home to many the realities of radiation; the US raid on Libya carried out by F-111s based in Britain illustrated how we could be drawn into a war not of our own choosing; and the succession of disarmament initiatives from the Gorbachev leadership have lessened cold war images of the Soviet Union. This greater concern for nuclear disarmament has been reflected in a series of opinion polls showing increasing numbers supporting Britain's unilateral nuclear disarmament and solid majorities against cruise, Trident and a Eurobomb. The successful link across Scotland in protest at the arms race attracting 45,000 people clearly touched and gave expression to that groundswell.

Can Labour give coherent voice and shape to this mood? Several doubts remain. Firstly, there is an underestimation of the depth of opposition its non-nuclear policy will provoke. Perhaps the Weinberger episode will have dispelled a few illusions. Secondly, until now, Labour has refrained from campaigning on its defence policy. This hesitancy has to end. Labour has no place to hide on this issue and it had best be bold and up-front about its policy.

Thirdly, the vast majority of Labour politicians keep the peace movement at arm's length. There are all too few like Ken Livingstone and Joan Ruddock, who appreciate its role in both creating the climate in which Labour's policy can flourish, and sustaining the popular momentum to carry through the policy when Labour gets into government.

Fourthly, and most importantly, the defence policy does not yet hang together with a new foreign policy. The removal of US nuclear weapons will inevitably disrupt Britain's previous relationship with the USA. The bloc system which has tied Britain and Western Europe to the USA for 40 years is under strain. For a British government anxious to end the subordinate 'special relationship' the only strategic option which makes geographical, historical, economic and political sense is to seek a role within an autonomous Western Europe. This option is not for a new militarist, nuclear-armed bloc *à la* David Owen, but as a grouping, de-aligned from the bloc system, and able to develop new relations with the USA, USSR and the Third World.

Yet at Blackpool it was left to Willy Brandt, in his address from the Socialist International, to make the point: 'There won't be peace without a European system of common security and there won't be a European system of common security without a British government playing a constructive role'.

If the Left can deliver a new strategic vision Labour may yet tap the yearnings of millions seeking a new, disarmament-orientated, internationalism. Such a perspective would also give Labour's defence policy the coherence it will need to withstand the onslaught of what will be a very dirty election dogfight. ●

Jon Bloomfield

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Black Power

There has been surprisingly little analysis in Britain of the events in Washington leading up to both houses of Congress overriding the president's veto of the sanctions bill.

The great model – the inspiration and example to the pro-Africa and anti-apartheid movement in the US – is the Zionist lobby. Ever since the war, it has used its tiny voting population (3%), money and organisational power to dictate American policy on the Middle East. Now, finally, the black Americans have shown what they can do: much less money, a lot more people (though probably greatly undercounted: well over 10% anyway), growing organisational skills.

The issue of South Africa has been building for many years now. It's nothing if not clear-cut for black Americans: Africa, the powerful symbol of identity and pride evoked through the idea of 'Black is Beautiful' and the civil rights movement.

It is essentially this growing identification of American black people with Africa, and an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the issues, which lies behind what otherwise would seem a surprise reversal.

The white liberal anti-apartheid movement has never been particularly strong in the US. Where it has scored has been in campaigns to block bank loans and investment in South Africa, and there is a strong analysis among campaigners across the board about the importance of withholding economic support from the apartheid system which would make Reagan's claims that sanctions equal job losses simply laughable.

Now that the pro-Africa lobby has won this victory, we should all get used to the idea that the US is going to be subject to continuing and if anything mounting pressure to support further moves against South Africa. ●

Barbara Rogers

Photo: Colorific

There's votes in virtue – Nancy Reagan campaigns against drugs

Poll Teasers

Try this quiz:
1 Who is head of the African National Congress?
2 Who is prime minister of Israel and who is his designated successor?
3 What terrorist act was directly linked to Col Gadafy by President Reagan and served as justification for the April bombing raid?
4 What is a Stinger missile and has the US supplied any to Saudi Arabia?
5 Where does the state of Maryland rank among the 50 US states in terms of amount of federal grant received?
If you got all five right, then you scored higher than all 17 candidates in the recent primary election for Maryland's seat in the US senate. If you got four right, then you tied with the victor of the Republican primary, former Reagan aide Linda Chavez. If you got one and a half right, you tied with Democratic congresspeople Barbara Mikulski and Mike Barnes.

The quiz, given by a Maryland tv station ('We thought they were darn basic questions,' commented a disappointed tv producer) proves several things about American politics: first, that the Reaganites do not have a monopoly on ignorance (Barnes, who lost the primary, actually serves on the House foreign affairs committee). Second, that to succeed in American politics, you mustn't waste time on issues of little importance to your electorate, like foreign affairs.

If the Democrats do win the biggest prize on offer in the forthcoming elections on November 4, namely control of the Senate, for which they need to pick up four seats, it will probably be due to one issue: drugs. Since last summer, America has suddenly discovered an 'epidemic' of drug use. Never mind that there is virtually no evidence this epidemic exists: never mind that most of the proposals are impractical, unconstitutional, or simply absurd: when America goes on one of its periodic 'benders of political hysteria', to quote the *Washington Post*, watch out!

Late one night last summer, 49-year-old Republican senator Al D'Amato (the favourite in the New York race) turned up on a Harlem street in a leather bomber jacket to purchase a vial of 'crack' (a concentrated form of cocaine), and 'prove' to the hidden tv cameras that it was easily available.

Democratic senator Alan Cranston (a tight race in California) recently endorsed Reagan's proposals for a compulsory death sentence for murders committed in the course of drug dealing (Cranston used to be an outspoken opponent of capital punishment and once sponsored a bill to decriminalise marijuana).

In Arkansas, both candidates for governor – and their wives! – took urine tests to prove they were not cocaine users. In Florida, Republican senator Paula Hawkins (coming up strongly from behind) applied, unsuccessfully, to make a guest appearance in an anti-drugs role on *Miami Vice*.

What would be the significance of a Democratic capture of the Senate? The answer is probably not too much. On foreign policy issues, most of the important battles have been fought out within the administration. The 'Great Communicator', until the sanctions vote, has had little trouble getting his foreign policies through Congress: even on the CIA-backed war against the Nicaraguan government, arguably unpopular with the electorate at large, Reagan has been able to get the already solidly Democratic-controlled lower house to roll over and play dead on request.

The election might make more of a difference to the international economy. If they command both houses, the Democrats will have a substantially bigger knife to hold in Reagan's back when he negotiates issues like trade barriers and farm price supports with foreign leaders.

What does it all mean to the

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1988 presidential race? Again, not a lot. The putative presidential contenders involved this year, men like Cuomo and Kemp in New York and Richard Gephardt in Missouri, are all virtual shoo-ins in their respective bailiwicks. The most significant developments might be in the broader sociological trends in American politics. The embourgeoisement of the Southern redneck has been one of the keys to the Republicans' dominance of federal politics since 1968.

Probably the most critical indicator of Southern Republicanism will be the tight senate race in North Carolina between reasonable, anti-racist, intellectual Terry Sanford – despite those drawbacks, still a slight favourite – and Republican James Broyhill, a right-winger whose supporters include apartheid's friend senator Jesse Helms, and the evangelist Reverend Pat Robertson, a truly frightening presidential hopeful, next to whom Ronald Reagan looks like Voltaire.

The one region where the Democrats may find some comfort is in the Midwestern farm belt. Since the collapse of commodity prices in the early 1980s, a growing agrarian populist movement has been making headway in states like Texas, Missouri and Iowa. Historically, the two periods of liberal reform in the past century were both made possible by farmers joining the urban lower classes in political protest.

The current farm depression – the worst since the 1930s – may be creating the conditions for a rerun of that alliance. That would influence not only the Democrats' chances in 1988, but who they choose as their candidate. Key races to watch are senate contests in Missouri and South Dakota.

Oh yes, the answers: *1*the tv station accepted either Nelson Mandela or Oliver Tambo. *2* Shimon Peres: Vitzhak Shamir. *3* Bombing of the La Belle discotheque in West Berlin. *4* A hand-held anti-aircraft missile; yes. *5* 35. ●

Jeff Ferry

Vishnu Sharma – a key figure in anti-racist battles for 30 years

Fighting The Raj and The NF

Vishnu Sharma holds a special place in the hearts and minds of the community in Britain and India. Born in 1922 in the Punjab, he was imprisoned at the age of 14 for his activities opposing the British Raj in India. Following independence, he continued his campaigning for workers' rights until political and economic pressures led to his departure from India in 1957. The day after his arrival in England, Vishnu applied for membership of the Communist Party, and joined the Indian Workers' Association in Southall, becoming the general secretary before long and national president in 1977.

Trace the development of local and national immigration and anti-racism campaigns, movements and organisations over the last 30 years in Britain, and Vishnu Sharma will feature. A founder of the 1960s Campaign Against Racial Discrimination and Ealing Community Relations Council, he became the first general secretary of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants in 1967, and retains his involvement with JCWI even now as its chair. It was at JCWI that Vishnu led the successful campaign to end the virginity testing of asian women immigrants.

But as important as any national position was Vishnu's work in building and supporting the rights of the Southall community. He organised the marches opposing Ealing council's bussing of black schoolchildren, encouraged the development of the Southall youth movement, and in 1979 was at the forefront of the protest against the NF election meeting in Southall. The death of Blair Peach at that demonstration and the mass arrests of innocent people undoubtedly shook Vishnu Sharma enormously at the time and has left a mark of deep personal sadness with him.

Vishnu has always been – and will remain – a fighter. He has inspired and helped me despite our differing political views, and I owe him much. I'm sure he will be remembered for his commitment, sincerity and loyalty to the Communist Party, to the people he served, above all to his country of birth, India, to where he is now returning. I wish him happy birthday and a long retirement in struggle. ●

Virendra Sharma

Shares At The Sales

This summer produced an unprecedented double-first in the advertising spending league table. According to the *Media Register* the Trustee Savings Bank spent £2.4m on advertising in August, and British Gas £1.7m, making these two campaigns the largest that month, dwarfing the traditional big spenders such as cigarettes, soap powder and stores. Yet the TSB campaign was not aimed at gaining a single new account. Nor was the goal of the British Gas ads to persuade us to use more therms. These huge promotions were to persuade the British public to buy shares.

These advertising campaigns were not just huge: before British Telecom used similar techniques in late 1984 they were unprecedented. They had previously been regarded as illegal.

Any City lawyer would say that ICI could extol the virtues of its chemicals and Marks and Spencer could advertise the long lasting qualities of its underwear but neither could tell the public that its shares were worth buying. These rules date back to the 1920s when the hawking of worthless shares through adverts, letters and over the doorstep, became a serious problem.

British Telecom changed all that. Dewe Rogerson, a City PR agency, was told at government level to sell the shares like soap powder, a task never suggested before. The agency's task was twofold. Firstly it had to give popular expression to the government's own vision of a share-owning democracy, in this case by persuading a sceptical public that a phone company of dubious quality was really a most attractive purchase. Secondly it had to enthuse the somewhat reluctant professional City investors who were unsure about

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BT's future earnings pattern.

Dewe Rogerson knew all about the ban on advertising shares and the Companies Act requirement for all application forms to be attached to a full prospectus. With the Department of Trade and Industry as the main guardian of the Companies Act, the agency decided to push against rules on share sales to see just how flexible they were.

They turned out to be extremely flexible. Advertising a forthcoming share issue proved to be fine as long as no judgement was passed on the value of the shares. Implying that you would miss something if you did not apply and running a parallel corporate campaign to extol the 'product' were equally permitted. At the same time BT advisers came up with the 'mini-prospectus' idea, which left out much of the detail in a full prospectus which is intended to protect the investing public.

TSB and British Gas are also Dewe Rogerson clients, and both have taken the BT hype a stage further. The TSB sell had two powerful external aids. A court decision that no-one actually 'owned' the TSB meant that successful applicants were buying into a hugely-expanded asset, since the proceeds of the share-issue went not to the Treasury, but straight back into the bank.

And then there was the influence of the well-publicised 'grey' market, which enables share-dealing ahead of the formal issue by speculators trying to second-guess the real opening price of shares. Reports from the TSB 'grey' market suggested that investors would more than double their initial stake.

British Gas will feature the biggest-ever direct mail campaign, with a 'personalised' letter to every gas consumer. To avoid being pronounced a failure, it must beat the 5m applications which the TSB attracted. For the government it is to be the crowning glory in their share-selling spree: no holds barred. ●

Tony Levene

Union Mergers

Leaders of four centre-right unions met in secret conclave during TUC week to draft an ambitious blueprint for a new mega-union which could dominate the TUC by the end of the century. 'Project 2000', as it is codenamed, carries a wide ranging brief to invite other like-minded unions to join in.

But this latest manifestation of the centre-right's quest for realignment within the TUC has already suffered a couple of body blows. Two of its Brighton architects – leaders of the building workers' union UCATT and the Institution of Professional Civil Servants – have had to pull out after the executives of both unions damped down their power-broking aspirations and put a block on future involvement.

These rebuffs have left leaders of the right-led electricians union, the EETPU, and the Amalgamated Engineering Union as custodians of the Project 2000 gameplan. The prospect of a bilateral merger between the two increased when right-winger Bill Jordan clinched the AEU presidency. But it still remains strewn with obstacles. The AEU's policy-making national committee has ruled out any merger talks involving an abandonment of the AEU's longstanding commitment to regular officer elections and the district committee structure. The electricians do these things rather differently: the ruling executive calls the shots.

The declared aims of Project 2000 are informed by a need to respond to changing skill and job territories. But a powerful subtext is the evident desire to eclipse the Transport and General Workers Union's block vote pre-eminence. Though hit by membership decline, Britain's biggest union still wields 1.4m votes, spurring the search for a rival centre-

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right grouping.

Project 2000's many precursors in the field have proved abortive, and in the medium term it too seems destined to remain a paper tiger.

But the developing courtship between two white collar unions with leftward leaning leaders merits close scrutiny. The mooted marriage between ASTMS and TASS would create the largest white collar union in the TUC; and on current membership figures, its sixth largest affiliate.

Both Clive Jenkins and Ken Gill are backing the plan, and a November joint union executive meeting is expected to map out the next stage of the 'TASTMS' amalgamation strategy.

If it comes off, both general secretaries would work in tandem until retirement. The move would make strong industrial sense for members working in engineering, a shared job territory in many cases. The merger talks have already prompted a joint white collar pay campaign at the Lucas Group which enabled union negotiators to coordinate limited industrial action.

But what shape would a joint TASTMS rulebook take?

TASS has a highly disciplined conference with around 150 voting delegates. ASTMS has a big hitter gathering which allows for more than 800 voting delegates, to reflect the diversity of its membership spread. The vexed question of compliance with the 1984 Trade Union Act on secret individual ballots for executive elections and before industrial action should prove fertile ground for inter-union debate. TASS elects its executive members on a branch vote system, through a single transferable vote. It has shown no signs of altering its balloting modes to fall into line with the law, and has reiterated its declared hostility to state interference in internal union affairs.

Freed from its strife torn link up with the engineers, TASS's hard left leadership has cast around for small unions of a similar ideological bent. It now likes to be known as the 'manufacturing union' and has absorbed the tobacco workers, sheet metal workers and pattern makers into its structure.

ASTMS – zealously expansionist since its creation – has used its flexible structure to open up new job territories through merger. Growth by acquisition is enshrined in the ASTMS rulebook, aided by the considerable degree of industrial autonomy given to small unions and staff associations which join up. Its finance sector membership – many of whom transferred en bloc from former in-house staff associations – are likely to be most resistant to the TASTMS concept.

The emergence of TASTMS would have a devastating effect on APEX, the clerical union, which has seen membership drop from 140,000 to around 90,000 over the past six years. Both the GMBU and AEU have made tentative merger overtures to APEX, and the union has called a special executive to consider options in January.

The current make-up of the TUC has been determined by successive amalgamations: in 1945 there were 191 affiliates compared to 88 today, despite the more recent arrival of the teaching and civil service unions. A confluence of internal pressures, personality clashes and dwindling membership and finances has tended to shape the merger pattern as much as industrial logic.

The TUC has been unable either constitutionally or through backroom guidance to impose a coherent pattern on union merger moves. As the labour market continues to fragment, inter-union competition for both membership and recognition rights is set to intensify. And all the signs are that the initiatives for carrying through mergers which attempt to answer the challenges posed by external structural change, will continue to rest upon the whim or will of the individual unions themselves. ●

Helen Hague

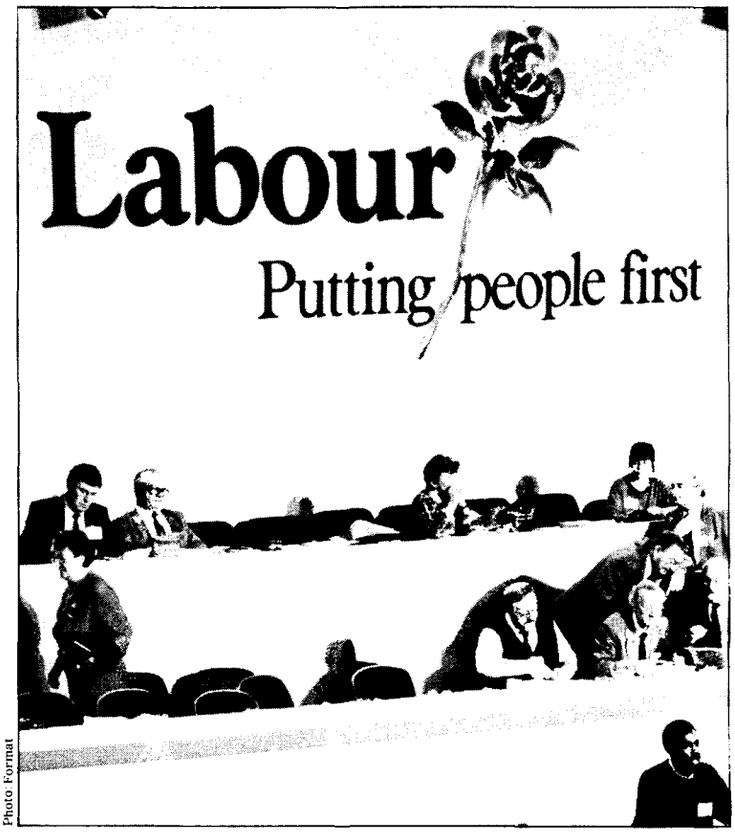

Photo Format

Roses Are Red

There's a seductive symbolism in the Labour Party's new rose. It rejects the harsh representation of the French socialist emblem, but is similar enough to be fashionably European.

Described as softer, more feminine, more sophisticated, it is a Saatchi-type image for the looks-conscious consumer.

But the rose is also a symbol of seduction. In the language of flowers you don't offer such a loaded gift to a sick aunt. A red rose, usually from a man to a woman, says more than words. This association with the worst aspects of sexual politics cannot surely have been overlooked by the party's image-makers. Or is it that the entire facelift is consciously geared-up to a return to quaint old-fashioned English-rose ways?

Labour MP Robin Corbett's remarks on this year's conference delegates reveal a more worrying side to the bloom: 'When I walked through the door I thought I was in the wrong place. All those people looking so clean, sensible and presentable. There were even men wearing ties and women wearing dresses. Where were the legions of women in dungarees I meet every year? I couldn't see one in the place.'

So, lipsticked glamour takes over as the face of feminism and style sells socialism? The triumph of the typeface and layout artist has ensured that form and presentation are no longer deadly labour sins because the party's found gloss.

Corbett clearly sees male/female stereotyping as a means of glueing together political rifts. But where were the feminist policies associated with the dungarees? They too had disappeared, subverted for the sake of unity. At least they were spared the indignity of being propositioned with a rose. ●

Jackie Wills

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Healthy Questions.

In an area as controversial as health care, there are bound to be many questions. But when it comes to NHS medicine supply the answers are often assumed. If you want more information about British medicines and their contribution to the nation's health and wealth, contact ABPI at the address below.

Q. How does the pharmaceutical industry affect the UK economy?

A. In 1985 UK pharmaceutical exports exceeded imports by over £830 million. Our domestic spending on medicines is only half that of our major competitors like the US, Japan and Germany. If Britain is to be able to afford good welfare services, we must be able to pay for them – pharmaceuticals are an area in which this country is outstandingly successful.

Q. What contribution to UK employment does the pharmaceutical industry make?

A. Over 80,000 people are employed directly by the UK pharmaceutical industry. A further 250,000 to 300,000 British jobs owe their existence indirectly to the pharmaceutical industry.

Q. Why is the number of NHS prescriptions rising?

A. Between 1979 and 1985 the total number of prescriptions dispensed in the UK rose by only 5%. Factors involved included the 'ageing' of the population, rising unemployment and the shift to community care. For some groups of medicines, such as tranquillisers, the total fell significantly.

Q. Does the pharmaceutical industry care about 'Third World' health?

A. Only about 10% of the UK pharmaceutical industry's revenue is derived from the entire Third World. Yet through ABPI, British medicine manufacturers accept their responsibility to aid global health progress. For example, pilot projects to improve medicine distribution are being funded in East Africa and the Maldives.

Q. Why should all the growth money available to the NHS go to medicine costs?

A. It does not. Since 1982 the proportion of NHS resources going to pharmaceuticals (costed in manufacturers' prices) has stayed roughly constant.
Less than one NHS pound in ten goes on medicines. Some 80% of NHS medicines are prescribed by General Practitioners. DHSS figures show that between 1979 and 1984 overall spending on the family practitioner services went up 10% more than their medicine costs.

Q. Haven't we already got the medicines we need?

A. Medicines and vaccines are not the only key to better health. But they have contributed significantly to the control of infections and the relief of disorders like depression, arthritis and heart disease. Unfortunately, however, many illnesses are still incurable, or only partly treatable. Providing research investment continues, many more effective pharmaceuticals will be developed to protect against conditions such as cancers, multiple sclerosis and AIDS.

Q. Does the pharmaceutical industry spend more on promotion than research?

A. In Britain the pharmaceutical industry spends, from its NHS income, twice as much on research as it does on promotion/information. If export earnings are added, UK research spending stands at over £500 million, more than three times UK promotional and allied outlays.

Q. Isn't the pharmaceutical industry excessively profitable?

A. The UK pharmaceutical industry's profits from the NHS are currently below the average for the companies quoted in the "Financial Times" 500 Index. The UK pharmaceutical industry has consistently invested more in this country than it has made in profit from the NHS.

For further information about medicines and health in Britain, write to Gail Turner at The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry's Health Information Desk, or telephone her on 01-930 3477.

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Sex on the agenda

About 120,000 teenagers will become pregnant over the next 12 months and two thirds of them will become mothers. The decision not to have an abortion may be the only positive decision many feel they've ever taken. Even if it's only a decision not to decide.

Their own mothers may welcome the new grandchildren but grit their teeth because they know what their daughters are letting themselves in for, that it's the agony and the ecstasy, and they know that their daughters don't know – yet.

Many of them will be the children of mothers who belonged to the first generation of women whose sexual lives have been lived in the era of scientific-chemical birth control. The daughters are all part of that era themselves.

And all of them are regarded as having done the *wrong* thing, ruined their lives.

I'm their mothers' generation, and like many of them I was a teenage werewolf, a thrill-seeker prowling around respectable coffee bars and dance halls for pleasure. The pill did not improve the quality of sex but it certainly allowed respectable girls to go for it.

The fact of the pill apparently offered the historic possibility of fear-less sex. Strangely enough, when it came to thinking about having, rather than not having children, it enabled women of the pill era, to do what in a sense, today's teenage mothers have done: decide not to decide – for a while. That's what I did anyway in my heterosexual days. Now my fertile days are numbered and I'm in my lesbian incarnation, so it's a bit more difficult: I'd have to decide to decide.

This is the first problem: to decide or not to decide. The great thing about birth control has been that it has allowed women to defer the decisions. But the trouble with family planning ideology is that it is exactly that: it suggests that it's all rational and planned, and therefore it is not ideologically fitted to the irrational and the indecisive and the unplanned. So it benignly disapproves of the teenage mother.

Young single parents have few political allies; they are now the target of a new Tory demonology, which has to some extent cheekily borrowed legitimacy from the very success of the birth control movement. The birth rate among teenagers has dropped by about 50%, since the early 1970s. So there's a notion that there's *no excuse!*

The Tory party's reaction to Sara Keays was that she must have known what she was doing, and therefore should never have got pregnant. It could cope with her being a cabinet minister's 'mistress' but not with her daring to be a single mother.

And on the extremist edges of the Right there is now a witchhunt against the single parent. Dr Rhodes Boyson told a Tory Party conference fringe meeting this year that the single mother is to blame for the evil hordes of wild boys, whose mothers failed to give them fathers. And Sir Frederick Catherwood suggested at another fringe meeting that they should have their benefits cut off.

Where does birth control politics stand amidst all this? Of course it defends 'choice', as it must, and it defends the young mothers. But its ideas about 'choice' are infused with WASP (white anglo-saxon protestant) and Yuppie (young upwardly mobile professional) values. It laments the teenage mother because she's ruined her life and because she's poor, the assumption being that she's poor because she's feckless.

Meanwhile, there's been a baby boom among Yuppies of 30+; they are family planning's success story. They are having their babies before its too late, but not before CSEs, GCEs and degrees have been passed, careers established, houses bought, nannies hired. If they're feminists they talk about motherhood a lot and keep threatening to write books about it. And some of them get married, too.

They *chose* to be mothers, it appears. Perfect mothers, perfect babies.

But there's something wrong here because it is not choice that differentiates the teenage mother and the 30+ Yuppie mother: it is class that makes the Yuppie mothers a success and the teenage mothers supposed failures. The teenage mother hasn't go her CSEs, and who knows if she'll ever have what's called a career. All she's got is a baby for whom, unlike her Yuppie sisters, she alone is totally responsible, 24 hours a day, in return for which she's got a passionate relationship. It's the one relationship that gives her any power and status and it makes her a woman.

But she didn't choose! It just happened. Anyway choice presupposes alternatives – between what? Being an adult and having to remain a *child*, infantilised by school, by unemployment, by baby wages on a work scheme and semi or unskilled jobs, by having to live in someone else's space, your mam and dad's home, sharing a bedroom with a little sister?

Recently I heard an eminent and pro-woman gynaecologist saying that pregnant teenagers would be better off pursuing their careers and wasn't it all awful.

No doubt she'd agree that part of the problem is that this society isn't fit for mothers. Childcare, for example, is the most successfully privatised bit of what the welfare state should have been. It should be a major political priority, but it isn't.

Yuppie mothers *buy* private solutions to what are public and political problems for the majority of mothers in Britain. They buy some other poor woman's time. And that applies to feminist Yuppies, too. This is not to condemn, it is just to say that there is an enormous class-culture gap between them and the young single mothers, who lack just about everything money can buy. What their problems expose is the isolation of politics, with some important exceptions, from the people living on the hardest edge.

What they could do with, and what they haven't yet got, is a caring party that cares for them. And to be more precise, that means making the space in politics so that they, too, can join in. And it means ordinary things, like they will be among the million people who get the jobs (no use if they don't get childcare, too) after – if – Labour wins the next general election.

A further thought about sex and birth control. The early birth control movement was both about the maternity crisis among working class women in particular, but about the pleasure crisis, too.

Birth control politics now, as then, needs to address women's sexual disappointment. It is that feeling which Victoria Gillick articulates in her pessimistic outlook. She speaks to the problem of teenage pregnancy by trying to proscribe both contraception and conception among the young. I think she wages war against girls becoming sexual women because she thinks men have been doing women over since Adam. And she doesn't buy the idea of free choice because she doesn't think women have any.

Sexual politics is the territory feminists share with Gillick. Don't get me wrong, I think she's horribly wrong, but Gillick with her angry pessimism marches in where Yuppie liberalism feared to tread – she's put the sex back into the technocratic politics of birth control. At least, she's put it back on the agenda by trying to take it off. Are we going to make sure it stays there? ●

Beatrix Campbell

Photo: Carol-Ann Allen

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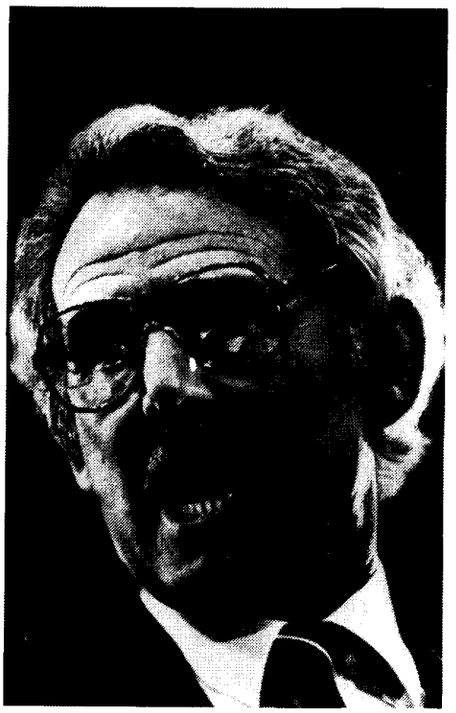

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LETTERS

Black Workers

I read the September issue of *Marxism Today* as usual with profound interest. Beatrix Campbell in her interview with John Edmonds raises numerous issues confronted by the unions. She touches upon the condition of women as employees in the union and their under-representation in the leadership, but in the whole article there is no reference to the condition of black workers.

It appears to me that blacks are not regarded as a part of multi-racial society, while the TUC admits that West Indian men get as much as £20 a week less and Asian men £18 less than white workers. It is also evident through the Labour Research Department that only 47% of all white workers are trade union members as compared with 56% of black workers, and there are only 13 full time black officers in the unions. Is it the view still that black workers are not part and parcel of the trade union movement?

Black workers are discriminated against, racially harassed, racially abused and racially attacked in every walk of life in Britain. I wonder why Beatrix as an interviewer failed to raise concern in regard to black workers' conditions.

I strongly feel that black people settled in Britain have made positive contributions to the society, which should be recognised and portrayed much more vigorously to counter the racists in the trade union movement; otherwise, the enemy of 'wage slaves' will continue to divide on the basis of colour. In no way can the divided workers challenge the power of capital. ●
Avtar Singh Sadiq, IWA

Lost Illusions

Raphael Samuel (Comment, October *MT*) has not enhanced his stature as an historian of the contemporary labour movement. In his article there is not a trace of an objective assessment of the miners' strike.

Instead, he uses it as a pretext for an outpouring of political gall against *Marxism Today* and the Communist Party.

His accusation that the Communist Party has abandoned its stand for 'unity' is so unrelated to reality that one can only assume that the characterisation is the projection of a 'deeply sectarian' political position on the part of the writer. Talk of unity comes strangely from one who displays such venom in the ancient business of bashing the CP.

Building unity depends on policies and actions which advance the interests of the labour movement and the majority of people, and that is what the stragegy of developing a broad democratic alliance is all about. The process of achieving the unity of the labour movement and building alliances does not mean a cessation of criticism within the Left, nor silence about mistakes made in important struggles, as Raphael seems to believe. Constructive criticism is essential to the development of unity.

Of course, facing up to present realities can be an uncomfortable process. Raphael evidently prefers to live in a lost world of illusions, in which setbacks are victories, leaders of industrial struggles are incapable of making any mistakes, and any criticism of them is to be branded as treachery. ●
Betty Matthews, London

Not Marxism

Having taken the politics out of psephology, it is understandable that Eric Hobsbawm would want a chance of putting them back in again. Unfortunately his pedestrian review of the experience of Labour government (*MT* October) contains not one single insight into the predicaments of democratic socialism or how they might be overcome by making the next crisis a reason for going beyond our promises rather than for going back on them. It is utterly impractical to think in terms of rebuilding Britain first and going forward to socialism subsequently. Hobsbawm is standing on his head. This is not Marxism today or at any other time. ●
Royden Harrison, Sheffield

Health Care

Steve Iliffe (*MT* October) identifies the need to strengthen local authority involvement in health care. Already cities like Sheffield, Leeds, Nottingham, Oxford and Liverpool, plus several London boroughs, have started to re-establish 'public health', forming health liaison committees and employing staff not only to campaign but to build data bases from which the real evidence of inequitable distribution of health care is emerging. Based upon the initial work of the 'Black Report', *Inequalities in Health*, these authorities are now able to demand from their health counterparts a redirection of provision. It is at this point that socialist class politics emerge since it is still not possible to effect these changes within the existing framework of unaccountable health authorities and entrepreneurial professionals.

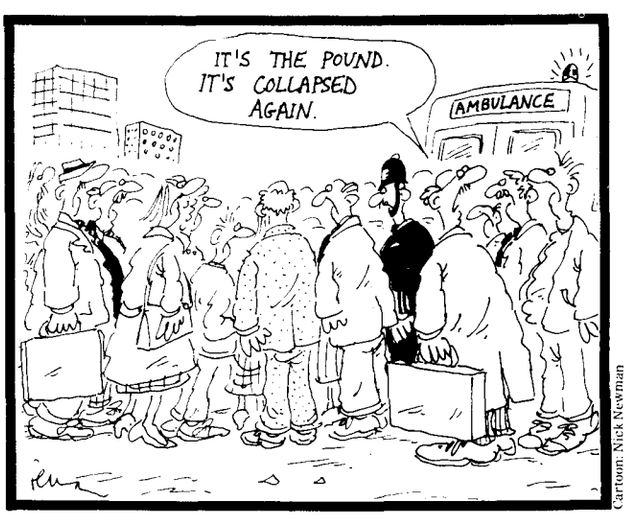
It is sad therefore to see the Labour Party retreating from a commitment to a salaried practitioner service, and the confusion on how health authorities should be structured. Steve Iliffe argues that priority should be given to social services, recognising that health is determined as much by housing, diet, employment or not, transport and environment. Whole health care can only be achieved if health is part of the local government machinery firmly subject to democratic control. ●
Keith Jerrome, Reading

Separatism

I agree warmly with Kate Soper when she affirms women's good sense (*MT* October). Representing the sexes as complementary and unequal, women 'intuitive' and men 'rational', is part of the gendering process that has kept women down and now threatens everyone's survival. It is also true that, as she says, there is some over-the-top mysticising in some (untypical) corners of the women's peace movement. This is not feminist, it is feminine-ist.

On the other hand she is completely wrong, in my view, to throw doubt on the strategy of women-only peace camps and disarmament actions. In mixed institutions and public places women are subject to men's overbearing ways and to personal violence. And it is when we are with men that we are driven into either acting feminine or behaving like men in order to get a word in. We need women's space precisely in order to transcend the gender trap and find ways of doing things that are less silly than either the masculine or the feminine.

It is because some women have been brave enough to make a space for other women that we have been able to develop a cogent, rational case for nuclear disarmament; to forge intelligent links with related movements; and create imaginative, enjoyable and eye-catching actions. Separatism is hopefully not for ever. It is a necessary expedient because centuries of being messed about in mixed situations has damaged our belief in our own logic. ●
Cynthia Cockburn, London



Cartoon: Nick Newman

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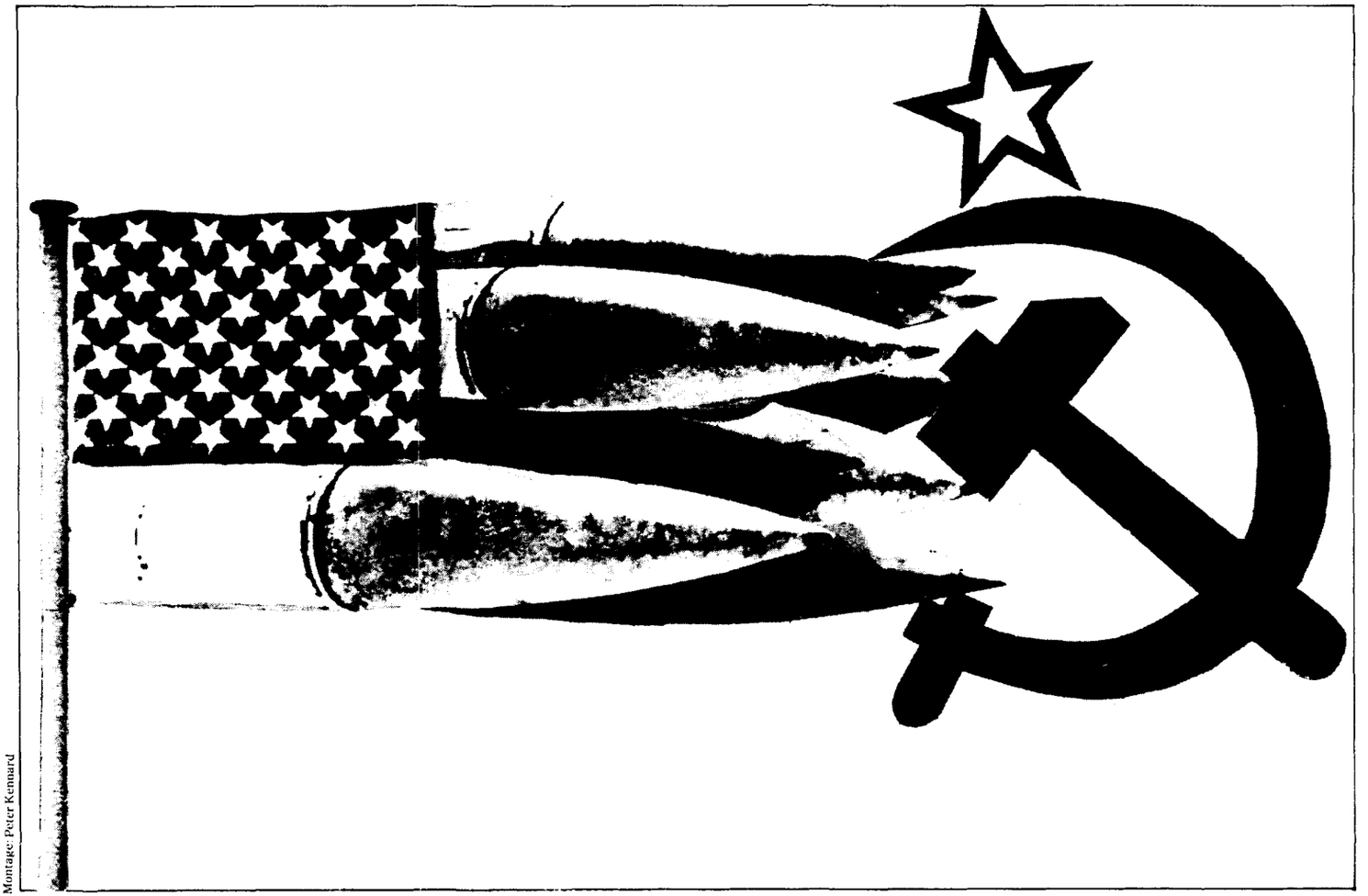

Montage: Peter Kennard

Reykjavik fiasco

Close Encounters

High hopes accompanied the Reykjavik summit. They were soon dashed. The mini-summit delivered nothing. **Gerard Holden** argues the only silver lining is that it leaves the Tories on the defensive

The Reykjavik mini-summit came as a surprise to most observers of East-West relations, not least to the unsuspecting citizens of Reykjavik. Throughout the polemics of the 'Daniloff/Zakharov affair' in September, it had looked unlikely that any sort of summit meeting could go ahead. The evident division and uncertainty of the Reagan administration made it seem equally unlikely that any kind of arms control agreement could be signed.

In the immediate aftermath of the Reykjavik meeting, it looks as though there are no agreements in sight and the summit process is grinding to a halt.

During the summer months preceding the mini-summit, a number of domestic and international pressures could be seen operating on the USA and USSR, although it was easier to see what Gorbachev hoped for from such a meeting than to identify clear US goals. Since the Geneva summit in November 1985, Gorbachev had argued that any further summit must involve solid agreements on arms control, or at least identifiable progress towards such agreements, most importantly on a Comprehensive Test Ban and/or some kind of constraints on Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) development.

Such a position is hard to retreat from, and Gorbachev may have seen Reykjavik as a way of testing whether

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Reagan would really compromise on any central arms control issue. If so, the summit process could go ahead; if not, Gorbachev could avoid the embarrassment of returning empty-handed from a full summit, and could argue more convincingly that he had done his best but the US could not be budged.

Gorbachev's handling of Soviet foreign since mid-1985 has been significantly more flexible and imaginative than his immediate predecessors. He has injected a new note of urgency into Soviet calls for restraining the arms race, and this has tended to convince middle opinion in the West, at least in Europe. The unilateral nuclear testing moratorium (announced in July 1985) and a number of subsequent proposals, including the January 1986 long-term disarmament plan, have been combined with more energetic presentation of policy (and smart PR gambits like sending Raisa Gorbachev to Iceland while Nancy Reagan languished at home). In addition, more attention has been paid to relations with Western Europe, Japan and China, than was the case under Brezhnev.

Although NATO likes to make charges of Soviet 'wedge-driving' between Western Europe and the USA, it is fairly clear that Soviet policy is primarily aimed at bringing pressure to bear on the USA through the medium of Western European governments. There has been widespread acceptance of the argument that Gorbachev needs a stable international situation and arms control agreements to release resources for the civilian economy, although this is a more complex question than is sometimes suggested. Medium and long-term developments like avoiding excessive expenditure on a Soviet response to SDI are of more economic importance than short-term arms control, and Gorbachev certainly does not believe that a reduction in defence spending would be *sufficient* to revitalise the Soviet economy as a whole – but the economic issue is certainly important.

Gorbachev also needed Reykjavik to con-vince domestic audiences that his conciliatory policy towards the West had borne some fruit. In a number of recent speeches, he had complained about the slow pace of implementation of his domestic policy initiatives, and it would be reasonable to assume that a success in foreign policy would have given him increased authority and room for manoeuvre domestically.

There have also been indications of unhappiness among the Soviet military with his foreign policy. As long ago as May, the Soviet Chief of Staff, Marshal Akhromeyev, spoke at a press conference of the 'moral-political' advantage which the USSR had gained from its unilateral test moratorium; his words seemed to be chosen to stress military support for party policy, but did not rule out the possibility of military disquiet over the purely military aspects of the policy, and so could also have served as a veiled reminder that the 'moral-political' advantage would need to be turned into a more tangible result. More recently, several respected Western sovietologists have picked up further rumblings of unease among the military, and after the impasse at Reykjavik, Gorbachev will have problems waiting for him at home.

By way of contrast, Reagan seemed almost to blunder into accepting Gorbachev's suggestion of the mini-summit. In the summer and early autumn, the administration came under pressure from Congress on a number of issues including spending on SDI and strategic weapons, nuclear testing, and eventually South African sanctions, where a presidential veto was overridden. It would be a mistake to interpret these events as indicating a fundamental shift in US foreign policy, but it was at least clear that Reagan could not take congressional support for granted, and Gorbachev's hopes of pressurising Reagan on SDI and testing were not total miscalculations. With mid-term elections in November, Congress and the public did seem to be demanding at least a show of conciliation from Reagan.

'Reagan seemed almost to blunder into accepting Gorbachev's suggestion of the mini-summit'

It is often argued that a right-wing president (Nixon being the prime example) can negotiate with the USSR more flexibly than would be possible for a liberal Democrat, but Reagan also has to guard himself against attacks from the Right. Here is the conservative columnist George Will, writing in the *Washington Post* in between the Daniloff-Zakharov 'trade' and the mini-summit itself: 'Ronald Reagan wants a summit in order to practice therapeutic policy. Mikhail Gorbachev wants a summit because he dines on people who think like that.' Reagan's personal popularity means that he could probably outflank such criticism if he really wanted agreements with Gorbachev. The likely opposition from the most hawkish elements *within* his administration, notably the arms control critics Richard Perle and Caspar Weinberger, would be more difficult to deal with.

It was to counter such criticism from the Right that Reagan spoke in the week before Reykhavik of the need to place human rights and 'regional issues' like Afghanistan on the agenda, in the full knowledge that not only was this not the Soviet agenda, but that there was little chance of substantive agreement between the sides on these issues. The new Soviet leadership is evidently more confident that it can give as good as it gets in a battle of denunciations over human rights, although the release this year of Anatoly Shcharansky, Yuri Orlov, and Irina Ratushinskaya has, if anything, weakened the Soviet argument that no 'linkage' should be made between human rights and other questions.

Since March 1985, revived US-Soviet negotiations have been conducted in a joint 'Nuclear and Space Talks' forum in Geneva. The central issues have been the US Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) and the related questions of the ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile) Treaty and a Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB).

The 1972 ABM Treaty prohibits any extensive development of the kind of anti-missile defences envisaged in Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative. Since the likely response of the USSR to SDI would be to increase the number and sophistication of its strategic nuclear weapons, it has become clear that no agreement to cut these weapons on either side is likely unless the US agrees to place limitations on its SDI research and development.

US reluctance to join the Soviet moratorium on nuclear testing is also related to SDI. Behind the reasons given publicly by the USA – first that a test ban would be unverifiable, and later that continued testing was needed to keep the nuclear stockpile usable – has been a desire to test 'third-generation' nuclear weapons involving directed nuclear energy, and to develop specific applications of this research which would be involved in SDI.

The USSR's arms control diplomacy during 1986 has focused on the need to restrain SDI and achieve a ban on testing, which are essentially strategic issues between the two major powers, though with implications for Europe. On the American side, there was some evidence of flexibility on limited forms of agreement at the European level. In September, an agreement was reached in the Stockholm Conference on Disarmament in Europe forum on notification and observation of military manoeuvres, and at the same time reports emerged that the Soviet and US positions on Intermediate Nuclear Forces (cruise, Pershing II, and SS-20s) were moving closer together.

The Stockholm agreement, while limited, was at least an agreement, but the prospects of agreement on SDI and strategic weapons have never looked good, and now look worse after Reykjavik. It seems extremely unlikely that the US will change its position on nuclear testing.

The pre-Reykjavik positions of the two sides on SDI involved suggestions for mutual commitments not to withdraw from the ABM Treaty for a set period, thus possibly restraining the development of SDI. The Reagan administration seemed reluctant to concede any agreement which would place any effective constraints on the programme, and it was hard to see the USSR signing any essentially cosmetic agreement which fell short of doing this. (The USSR knows that SDI as described by Reagan won't work, but there is still a fear of the unpredictable military consequences of a massive research programme.)

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The prospect of a 'grand compromise', trading SDI development for large cuts in strategic missiles, had been welcomed by US arms control advocates outside the administration. The USSR seems to have made this kind of offer, including a tightening of the ABM Treaty, during the Reykjavik meeting itself, and the breakdown of the meeting came over this point. Reagan seems to have offered deep missile cuts (according to Shultz, total elimination) and a 10-year extension of the ABM Treaty, but to have insisted on a 'broad' interpretation of the treaty, which would have made such a commitment of little value.

Reagan's personal commitment to SDI, and the impossibility of shifting his administration's hardliners on the issue, probably made this outcome inevitable. From the Soviet point of view, the most optimistic calculation now may be that Reagan's successor will be unable to sustain the necessary political and economic support to continue with SDI.

In the run-up to Reykjavik, the US administration appeared less rigid on nuclear weapons in Europe, and was widely considered to be prepared for an agreement in this area. Gorbachev had in fact made it very difficult for the US not to admit the possibility of agreement, since during 1986 he made several adjustments to the Soviet negotiating position on Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF). The USSR first accepted that an INF agreement was possible without agreement on SDI, then that INF weapons should not be included in the 'strategic' balance, and then lifted its earlier stipulation that British and French nuclear forces would need to be frozen before any INF deal could be agreed. In return, the US proposed a cut to 100 INF warheads on either side, and a compromise deal was confidently predicted before the Reykjavik meeting.

In the event, it seems to have fallen victim to the central breakdown over SDI, although it is not clear whether the USSR reversed its earlier position on separating INF from SDI negotiations (perhaps an exercise in summit brinkmanship), or the deal proved impossible for other reasons.

At the time of writing, this is one of the oddest aspects of the Reykjavik events – did Gorbachev suddenly reverse a policy on INF which he had taken great pains to develop? Or was there some kind of US disinformation campaign, with the stories about a likely INF deal being leaked when it was in fact far from completion, in order to discredit Gorbachev when the summit collapsed? Early reports were contradictory, but it did not look as though there had simply been a failure to agree on numbers of warheads.

The question also arises of why the Reagan administration might have shown more flexibility on the European issues than on strategic weapons and SDI. One possibility is that an INF deal looked like a good way of strengthening the credibility of West European Atlanticist governments and of multilateral disarmament, at a time when opposition parties like the West German SPD and the British Labour Party were consolidating defence policies which would, to varying degrees, certainly cause tensions within NATO if put into practice.

'Smart PR gambits like sending Raisa Gorbachev to Iceland while Nancy Reagan languished at home'

The State Department may possess enough sophistication to try this strategy, although Perle and Weinberger have recently shown that the Pentagon has more straightforward ways of approaching the problem of recalcitrant Europeans. Perhaps an equally likely explanation is that minor concessions in Europe were the maximum on which the factions of the administration could all agree, since even Perle has never been particularly concerned about Euromissiles and always recognised their political rather than military significance.

How will the Reykjavik communication breakdown affect the British debate on defence and disarmament? One could argue that now no agreement seems possible in the short term, the unilateralist peace movement and the Labour Party will be in a relatively straightforward position: multilateralism again looks a sham, as the peace movement has often argued, with the US bearing the brunt of the blame.

The last point is likely to be accepted by many European commentators – pre-Reykjavik coverage by sources like the *Observer*, *Financial Times*, and *Panorama* suggested this very strongly. (In this sense, a significant part of Gorbachev's foreign policy, the desire to convince Western Europe of Soviet sincerity on arms control, has already succeeded.)

It is quite possible that in these circumstances, nuclear unilateralism could gain Labour more votes than it loses, if we set aside for a moment the question of Labour's ability to present the policy coherently.

If some kind of Euromissile deal can eventually be rescued from the collapse of the mini-summit, the position may become more complicated. Labour could argue that pressure from below has forced the US and USSR into an agreement, and this should be taken as a starting-point for further reductions in nuclear forces. However, it is not clear that Labour would be able to make this argument stick, and Thatcher's speech at the Bournemouth Tory conference has already indicated that she at least is convinced that Labour is as vulnerable on defence as in 1983.

In the event of an agreement, Labour would have had to deal with a counter-argument on these lines: multilateralism has worked, the original 1979 NATO dual-track decision to deploy new weapons and negotiate at the same time has been proved to be the correct approach, the USSR is not unilateralist and Labour should not rock the boat. Although the possibility now seems to have evaporated, Labour and the peace movement might have been left in a difficult position by an agreement which left a token number of cruise missiles at Greenham. This underlines the importance for Labour of developing its non-nuclear strategy in a way which will not be too vulnerable to fluctuations in US-Soviet relations.

There would have been nothing particularly surprising about Soviet participation in such an agreement involving cruise, since the January 1986 Gorbachev proposals and his subsequent diplomacy have themselves been of a 'dual-track' nature. As well as the sweeping proposals for a nuclear-free world, which echo peace movement demands and suggest a more ambitious agenda than traditional 'arms control', Gorbachev's proposals have always contained elements designed to appeal to centrist European Atlanticists. The aim has been to establish as wide a range of support as possible, and thereby put the maximum pressure on the US leadership. One only has to recall David Owen's enthusiastic response to Gorbachev's January 1986 proposals to appreciate they were not aimed exclusively at unilateralist peace movements. Whether or not one takes literally the Soviet commitment to a nuclear-free world by the year 2000, in practice the situation has been such that this 'utopianism' has always been likely to give way to the more limited arms control aspects of Gorbachev's proposals.

The silver lining of the Reykjavik events may be that the peace movement is not faced with the problems of demobilisation which might have resulted from a partial agreement. In that sense, Reagan may have done Labour and CND a favour in the short term, by identifying his own stubbornness over SDI as the prime reason for the failure of the meeting. Gorbachev now has the problem that Reagan's unreasonableness has been made all the more obvious, but Soviet policy has not produced any concrete results. Furthermore, if there was indeed a retreat from the earlier Soviet position on the INF issue, Gorbachev has for the first time looked uncertain in his handling of policy towards Western Europe.

Even so, West European NATO governments will now be on the defensive over US policy. Reagan and Shultz will doubtless try to argue that since the threat of SDI has such a powerful effect on the USSR, the programme should be continued and adequately funded. Whether Congress will fall for this is another matter – since the administration hasn't actually got any *agreements* out of the Soviet side, it is a thin line of defence. Never has 'bargaining from strength' looked such a hypocritical strategy. ●

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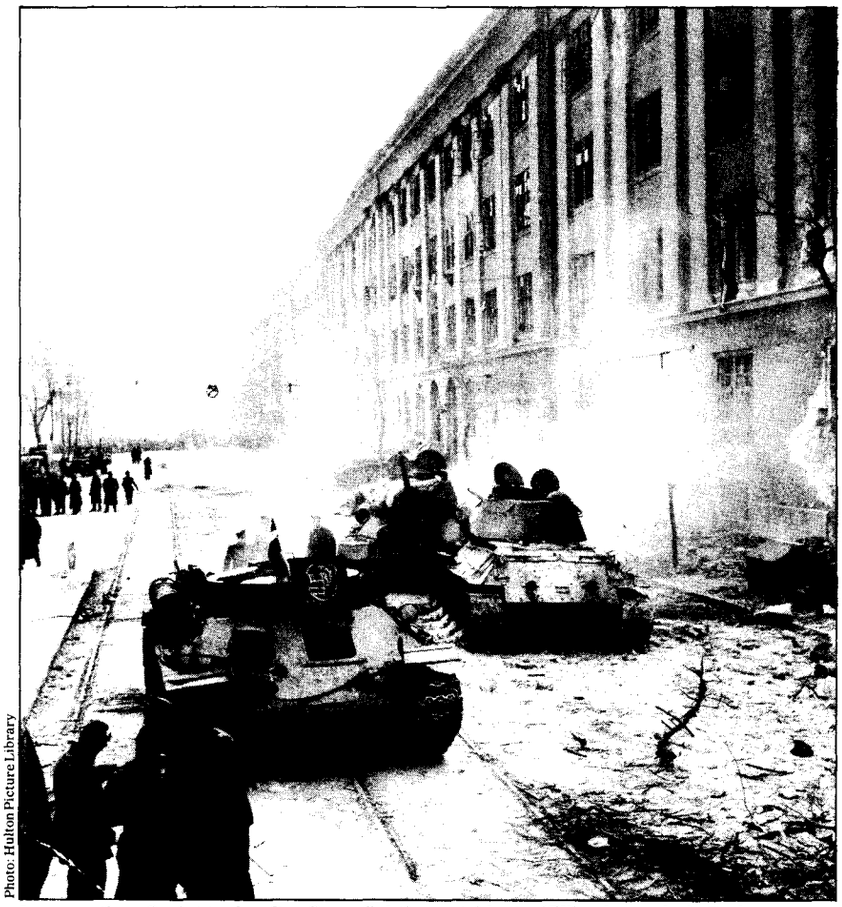
Photo: Frank Spooner Pictures

Khruschev: Opening act in the drama



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Intervention: Soviet tanks after fierce fighting outside the Killian barracks in Budapest

1956

1956 was one of those momentous years to which the label 'turning point' can be attached without a shade of embarrassment. The 20th congress of the Soviet Communist Party proved to be the most significant since 1917. Together with the Soviet military intervention in Hungary, it ensured that the international communist movement – including the British Communist Party – was never to be the same again. Then there was Suez crisis, and much else. **Eric Hobsbawm**, (below) in this interview with Gareth Stedman Jones, tells the story.

This year is the 30th anniversary of 1956, arguably a turning point in the history of the communist movement, and the British Left. Perhaps I could begin by asking you to give a rough chronology of what you think were the important events of 1956 and how they affected you?

It was a very dramatic year and it worked up to a climax rather like a good play. Essentially it started in February with the 20th congress of the Soviet Communist Party, in the course of which Khruschev made his famous secret speech in which he denounced Stalin. The foreign delegates – including Harry Pollitt, Palme Dutt and George Matthews from Britain – were sent away to speak elsewhere, so they didn't hear it. Then nothing much happened, except that it was clear something fairly drastic had been said and people began to get a bit dissatisfied. At the end of March there was a congress of the British Communist Party. It was after that congress that opposition, or at any rate uncertainty, started to be expressed.

Edward Thompson wrote a letter, which, by coincidence, was published in the *Daily Worker* early in June on the very same day on which the text of Khruschev's secret speech was released by the US state department. It had been leaked somewhere in the Soviet Union, and it was shortly afterwards published in the *Observer*. Officially, of course, it still didn't exist. Now after that, a good deal of debate developed within the communist movement. Mostly it was fairly muffled. Though right from the start Togliatti, the general secretary of the Italian Communist Party, in answering some questions put by an Italian journal, gave some fairly straight answers, arguing that the way the thing had been explained simply as a cult of personality wasn't good enough; what one had to account for was how the Soviet Union had got into this state.

At this stage, the second dramatic element comes in, namely Suez. At the end of June, Nasser was elected president in Egypt and within a month the Suez canal had been taken over by the Egyptians, and the plotting between the British, French and Israelis started which eventually culminated in the Suez war at the beginning of November.

In the meanwhile there were various other developments. For instance, about then Ghana became the first African country to achieve independence; and Tito, who previously had been drummed out of the international communist movement, came back and visited Moscow. Things were obviously happening. Meanwhile the Poles started rioting in June.

And while all this was happening, it was quite clear that in the British Communist Party something fairly dramatic was happening because Harry Pollitt resigned from being general secretary and became chairman, and Johnny Gollan took over. While the

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Photo: Hulton Picture Library

Middle East showdown: A British tank patrols in Suez before American pressure forced Britain and France to withdraw their forces

first internal party opposition paper, the *New Reasoner*, was published in mid-summer, edited by Edward Thompson and John Saville.

As autumn set in, the drama deepened with the Suez crisis growing more acute and the unrest in Eastern Europe becoming much more serious. In Poland the whole thing was settled very quietly by allowing the old stalinist leadership to be removed and Gomulka to come forward. But then, encouraged by this, the Hungarian demonstrations started at the end of October. On October 24 Imre Nagy, who was later on to be executed, became the Hungarian premier. The situation then moved very rapidly, and on November 1 the government declared it was going to leave the Warsaw Pact, this announcement more or less coinciding with the Suez war. The Russians and the Americans threatened the British and the French with action unless they withdrew from Suez: and in the face of the American threat, the British and the French gave in. And while all this was happening, the Russians decided to intervene with armed force in Hungary.

This is the context in which the debate within the Communist Party, and indeed the international communist movement, developed. In fact it was during the Hungarian crisis that it reached its climax, with on the one hand the preparation of a special party congress, to be held early in 1957, and on the other hand a serious opposition being organised for the first time. It was at this stage that everything started, so to speak, going up in flames. That, very briefly, is the picture of a rather spectacular year.

'The cold war at least gave people the certainty that you were on the right side'

You said that around April 1956 you got the first signs of opposition within the British Communist Party. What sort of inner party discussion was there before that congress? Was there any expectation that there would be a major revelation from the Soviets? Was there any agreement, for instance, with Deutscher's position, which had been stated before then, that some sort of thaw in the USSR was bound to come? Was there an expectation of change before the CPSU 20th congress or did the congress really come out of the blue so far as British party members were concerned?

Absolutely out of the blue. We hadn't, of course, been in the habit of publicly criticising the USSR anyway. And the USSR itself was not telegraphing its punches at all. I mean it was clear to those of us who listened to the congress, or read reports of the congress, that even before the secret speech there were some rather notably critical remarks by Mikoyan. And one wondered what else was going on.

But this was quite unexpected and certainly very few people inside the communist movement agreed with Deutscher, whatever he said, since Deutscher was associated with the trotskyist tradition, and most people in the communist movement retained a belief in complete loyalty to Stalin and the USSR, a loyalty which had been paradoxically reinforced by the cold war. For the cold war at least gave people the certainty that somehow or another you were on the right side. And because clearly the reactionaries, the Americans, the imperialists, were concentrating so much fire against them, then this clearly was not the moment to start rocking the boat. In a sense the possible erosion of the considerable strength which communist parties had developed at the end of the war was frozen for a period by the intensity of the cold war confrontation.

Was there any discussion in the party, officially or informally, of the purges which took place – I'm thinking particularly of Czechoslovakia and Hungary in the late 40s, early 50s? Did it worry people or was this overwhelmed by the sense of confrontation between the world camp of imperialism and that of communism, so that these were thought to be minor questions?

No. I think by this time people worried much more about them. This was quite unlike the situation in the 30s where, on the whole, people did not worry about the show trials in the Soviet Union because they said, whatever the ins and outs of it, it was overwhelmingly important to be on the side of the Soviet Union. This was not only an attitude of communists, but of the masses of anti-fascists. After the war even many communists were worried about it,

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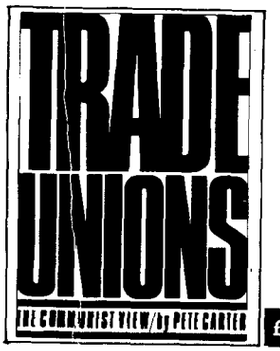

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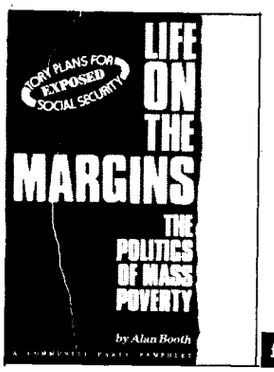

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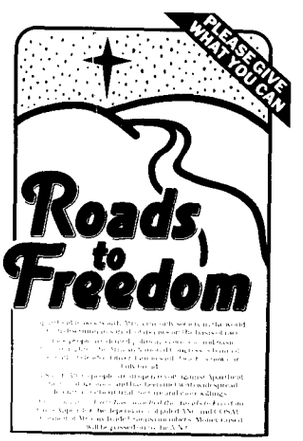

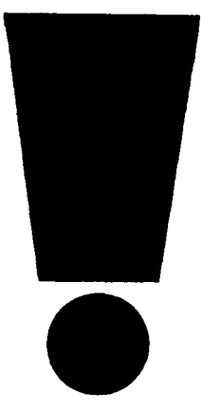

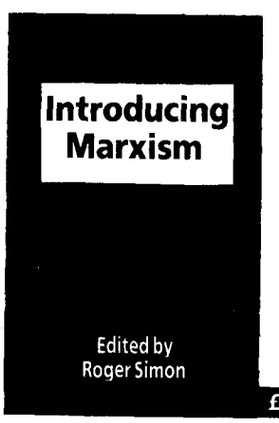

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partly because we knew the people concerned.

For instance one of the things that stuck in my own gullet is that at some stage – I think it was during the Rajk trial in Hungary – somebody accused Basil Davidson of being a well-known agent of the British intelligence service. Well, I knew the man, and it seemed to me to be rather implausible. People used to say, 'well, of course, nothing is impossible, who knows, it could be true' – so indeed it could, but nevertheless if you knew a certain person, you said to yourself it just doesn't seem terribly likely.

'It was perfectly evident that what we were talking about was not spots on the sun but something much more fundamental'

Similarly, for instance, there were a lot of people who knew some of those accused in the Czech trials, because, as you may remember, it was particularly people who had been in exile, indeed who had been in the West, who were targeted. They were people whom one knew, and that was very worrying. These things, together with the Soviet denunciation of the doctors' plot in 1952, which did seem to have a rather marked anti-semitic slant, undoubtedly started to worry people. But they didn't talk much about it.

Was there, within the party or amongst your own acquaintances within the party, any analysis of what one would call stalinism before 1956?

I think very little, certainly in public. There were people who took an interest in contemporary Soviet history, but there wasn't much chance of dealing with this in public without stepping on somebody's toes, or being stepped on, as the case may be. There was very little talk indeed about the Soviet Union, and the people who knew about it kept very quiet.

You mention the critique which began around the *New Reasoner* circle from April onwards, and Edward Thompson's letter to the *Daily Worker*. And you referred to Togliatti's candidness, for a communist leader, in actually discussing the inadequacy of the secret speech. Were these two reactions in parallel?

Yes, I think they were. I think you're wrong in saying it began around the *New Reasoner* circle, though. The *New Reasoner* evolved out of this uneasiness within the party. If there was any group which actually formulated it, it was the historians' group, which contained all these people, or most of them anyway, and which had been extremely loyal until 1956. But after the British congress in April, the historians' group began to say, this is simply an inadequate analysis of what has been happening in the Soviet Union. Our party, moreover, has got to look at this too, because this affects us as well as the Soviet Union. We must do something about it.

The issue was sharpened in June by a very ill-considered piece by Palme Dutt in *Labour Monthly*, who dismissed the whole thing, and said the fact that there are spots on the sun doesn't mean it isn't the sun. This really got under a lot of people's skin. It was perfectly evident that what we were talking about was not spots on the sun but something much more fundamental. It was after that that the discussion began to get a bit more inflamed. People like Edward Thompson and John Saville then started the *New Reasoner*, and a large number of people, party intellectuals in particular but also others, contributed. I did myself, to show solidarity.

But this journal was started at the time not with the intention of leaving the party presumably, but of trying to transform it.

Exactly. It was started for that very reason, arguing that clearly something major had happened in the history of the communist movement, that we needed to understand what had gone wrong, and why we had behaved in the way we had, and so on.

At what point did this grouping around the *New Reasoner* and the Communist Party leadership become incompatible? At what point did they actually leave, or were thrown out?

The *New Reasoner* was simply one organised group, and not necessarily the only one. There were a lot of other people concerned. There was a continuum. You could say that virtually everybody on the intellectual side and a good many other people too, trade unionists for instance, were dissatisfied. There was considerable demand for discussion inside the party. And in the pre-congress discussion, for the special congress, it was quite clear there was a very sharp division. In communist parties in those days there wasn't much in the way of open disagreement with the official line, but in the pre-congress discussion roughly speaking one-third of the people that wrote in were in disagreement.

It's wrong to focus on the *New Reasoner*, which happened to be occupying a very exposed position, simply because in those days to publish an opposition journal, within the Communist Party, was virtually unthinkable. And they were pushed out of the party, suspended from party membership, and then resigned, fairly early on. The most massive expression of dissidence was a letter which the party refused to publish, and which subsequently appeared in *Tribune* and the *New Statesman*, disagreeing with the official party line, and Soviet line, on Hungary, and opposing the Soviet intervention. The signatories included the *New Reasoner* group and others like myself and Maurice Dobb, and we were all severely reprimanded by the party leadership for this. But here again, you see, to publish in the non-party press was in those days a very heavy thing.

By this time, everyone was living, I suppose you could best call it, the political equivalent of a nervous breakdown. Because the debates in the Communist Party were so intense and feelings were so strong amongst the people who refused to express any criticism, as well as the people who only wished to express muted criticism or who wanted to go further. It's not easy to remember everything that happened, except for this extraordinary atmosphere of crisis in which we lived for several months and which only finally abated during the course of 1957 after the opposition got routed at the special congress early that year.

How did people who were discontented with the party in 1956 want to change it?

There were some who simply wanted more discussion, and who felt that with more and franker discussion, these things wouldn't have happened. As far as Eastern Europe is concerned, we had honestly believed that the new regimes there, including the one in Hungary, enjoyed popular support. Perhaps not in East Germany, but that was a special case. And there was some evidence in support of this: the achievement of the East European countries in the period 1945-56 is not to be neglected. Wajda's film, *Man of Marble*, shows that positive things were being done during that period. With all their drawbacks, we thought they were popular governments.

We were therefore profoundly shaken to discover, quite undeniably in Hungary, that very large sections of the people were not behind it. It set us thinking, 'you cannot conceivably force a people to support a government, you can't claim that the people support it, so the situation simply must be reviewed. The party has got so out of line with the people that they are prepared to make a revolution against it, therefore something's got to be wrong. I don't think we thought much beyond that. There was, I think, on Hungary a difference between some people who said, 'right, if Hungary wants to leave, well tough, this is just a setback, we shall have to accept it', and the others who said, 'no, we can't'. In fact both sides utterly overlooked the real situation, which was that the Americans and West were not going to intervene in Hungary or anywhere in Eastern Europe. They were full of hot air, calling for people to revolt against the Russians, but when it actually came to the crunch then the basic division, the Yalta division, which was a great power division, with Eastern Europe as the Soviet zone of influence, was not being challenged. Thank god.

Of course we weren't thinking in those terms. To some extent we were transposing the East European situation to Britain, asking what would happen if a communist government here found itself so far out of line with the people, that they were prepared to revolt against it. Surely then, something very basic must be wrong with the regime and had to be put right. That's a bit of

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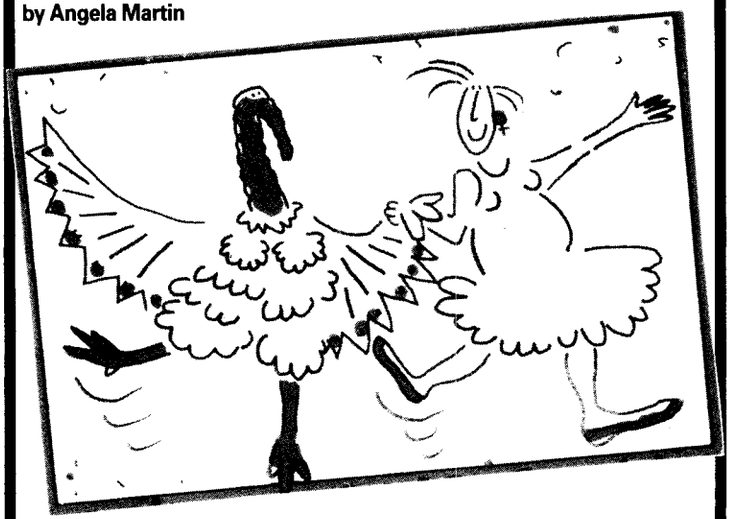

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'In some sense our souls were saved by the fact that we weren't simply struggling against abuses on our own side, we were also fighting what was an obvious case of British imperialism'

reconstruction, but I think it is roughly right.

Unlike many of the people around the *New Reasoner*, notably Thompson and Saville, you decided to stay in the party. Could you tell us a bit about your thinking at the time? What were the issues of disagreement between yourself and others who actually left the party as a result of this battle?

I don't think there were any substantial issues of disagreement at all. We were basically all trying to do the same things. We disagreed with some people who damned us all and said we must stick together in the party, solidarity, democratic centralism and so on. The difference was between whether one had to give up the Communist Party or stay in.

Of those that left, some decided they couldn't stand it any more while, in the case of several important union people, then they took this opportunity to leave because for one reason or another they didn't need the party anymore. I think this was the case for Les Cannon of the ETU, whom I knew at the time. He resigned because he had a grudge which had very little to do with Hungary, and a lot to do with the ETU. There were other views. Isaac Deutscher, for instance, said to me that if he were in my position he wouldn't leave the party.

The main question in my own case was simply this: I was prepared to get expelled, if anybody wished to expel me, on the issue of maintaining good relationships with the people that left, because I felt these people were not traitors. Those of us who stayed stood for the same things, were fighting for the same things. And it was absolutely essential to maintain, if you like, a common ground between people who were left wing, marxists even, marxist historians in fact in this specific case, and to refuse to allow this temporary question to come between us. Now you may say that this indicates a certain weakening of the old belief that, as Catholics used to say, 'outside the church there is no salvation', you have to be in the Communist Party or else there's nothing. Once upon a time we believed this and perhaps 1956 indicated that even those of us who stayed in, no longer believed it in quite the same old way. But we still believed, some of us, it was more important to stay in the Communist Party than not.

Was it in fact true that you maintained good relations or was there a period of some strain and coldness?

No. Not with the people who began the New Left, not the ex-*Reasoner* people. At least not as far as I was concerned. There was a period of strain with the party leadership, but there must have been people in the party leadership who also saw that it would be absurd to start excommunicating people. In France that's what they did, as soon as somebody was out, they were a traitor. On both sides, we tried hard to avoid this and I'm proud to say that we did avoid it.

Was that one of the peculiarities of the British situation?

Yes, I would say so.

How would this connect with the formation of the New Left? A previous generation of communist intellectuals who'd left the party on the whole either moved into political quietism or moved considerably to the right. Whereas, by and large, those who left the Communist Party in 1956 not only didn't move substantially to the right, but also didn't desert active politics of one sort or another. How far was this connected with the fact that this wasn't just the year of Hungary and the 20th congress but also the year of Suez?

This was very important. In some sense our souls were saved by the fact that we weren't simply struggling against abuses on our own side, we were also fighting what was an obvious case of British imperialism, in the most naked and bare-faced way. I suppose we, and the British bourgeoisie, and the British Labour Party, ought to criticise ourselves for not actually seeing the significance of 1956, namely the genuine fall of Britain as a major bourgeois state. I don't think we quite realised it. Nevertheless what we knew was that we were in the struggle, we were demonstrating in Trafalgar Square, listening to Aneurin Bevan and all the rest of it while this was going on, and the very fact that we were fighting the good fight, while at the same time being engaged in this terrible internal thing, certainly helped.

The original New Left was made up entirely of people who had left the party or were expelled from it. The *University and Left Review*, which evenutally became *New Left Review*, was in effect a merger between the *New Reasoner* people and a number of younger party people, like Raphael Samuel, who came out of that, together with a number of others. Once again people like myself tried quite deliberately to work together with the *University and Left Review*, and *New Left Review*, in order to demonstrate that a common front was being maintained. And so, incidentally, did people like Deutscher who at that stage came in from the cold, because people now recognised his position.

Then there were many who had left the party and didn't quite know what to do. And this provided the first basis intellectually speaking for a certain revival of Trotskyism, which previously had very little significance indeed. Then a number of others went in peculiar directions. Peter Fryer who had been the *Daily Worker's* correspondent in Hungary, ended up becoming a libertarian journalist specialising in sexual themes. Peter Cadogan became an ultra-libertarian. While Doris Les-

1956: The Year

February: 20th congress of Soviet Communist Party: in a secret speech Khruschev denounces Stalin's policies and the 'cult of personality.'

March: 24th congress of British Communist Party (March 30 – April 2).
Reports of Khruschev's secret speech carried in the Western press.

June: Rioting in Poznan (Poland) with many deaths.
Nasser elected president of Egypt.

July: Egypt takes over Suez Canal.

August: Ghana achieves independece from Britian.

October: Gomulka elected first secretary of the Polish United Workers Party.
Demonstrations in Hungary call for democratic government, the return of former premier Imre Nagy to power and the withdrawal of Soviet troops (22nd).
Nagy is appointed minister-president and re-elected to the politburo; violence breaks out in Budapest; state of emergency declared; Soviet troops intervene in Budapest (24th).
New Hungarian government under Nagy (including non-communists) (27th).
Soviet troops begin withdrawal from Budapest, but more enter NE Hungary (30th).
British and French troops bomb Egyptian airfields.

November: Hungary renounces Warsaw Pact Treaty and appeals to UN against Soviet intervention (2nd).
Soviet forces again intervene in Budapest: Nagy takes refuge in Yugoslav embassy; Kadar forms government (4th).
Massive 'Law not War' demonstration over Suez in Trafalgar Square (5th).
British troops land at Port Said (5th).
Anglo-French ceasefire in Egypt (7th).

December: Anglo-French forces begin withdrawal from Egypt (5th).

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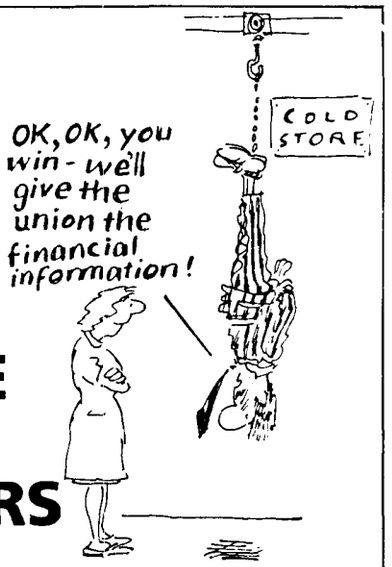

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sing, who also left in 1956, went in her own different direction. So people became unpolitical in some ways, or else they became, shall we say, un-party political. But by and large they stayed on the Left.

What you've done so far is to very much emphasise the smallness of the division between those who left and people like yourself who stayed. But the whole impact of 1956 must have made you rethink some of your politics and your attitude towards the party. Could you tell me something about how you feel 1956 and the experience of that year affected your own work and thinking?

It was a major break in the sense that before then, we had believed that to be a marxist meant to be in the Communist Party, and to be in the Communist Party meant total loyalty, at least in public, to the Soviet Union. From 1956 this was no longer the case, simply because such a large number of people had left without necessarily becoming traitors. But above all, it became clear that the thing that had kept us from enquiring too closely into the Soviet Union, could not be kept up any longer. From the moment that the Soviet government admitted things which some of us might have partly suspected – though none of us had actually known the extent to which the Stalin terror had affected the Soviet Union – then that automatic solidarity simply broke down. That meant, in effect, that each party no longer gave automatic solidarity to the Soviet Union, or to the international communist movement, while to some extent the uncritical way in which we had normally accepted the authority of the central committees and political committees within our own parties began to break down.

'Whatever its future may be, I think the net judgement on the Communist Party's role since 1920 is enormously positive'

One of the things that strikes me, looking back now at 1956, in the light of subsequent developments in communist parties, notably the reforming impulses, is that perhaps more prophetic in 1956 of these, of what left politics was going to be, was Tony Crosland's *Future of Socialism*, rather than some of the themes which came to the surface in the New Left at the time or in the next few years. What was your feeling about Crosland?

My feeling about Tony Crosland was that he was a very able man who got drunk very often, and when he got drunk started arguing in a bad tempered way. Otherwise we didn't actually think a great deal, because the so-called revisionists on the Labour side were people of whom we disapproved, and I think we were quite right. The basic thing that was wrong about Tony Crosland and that kind of revisionism is that he assumed that the basic problem of the British economy had been solved, you didn't have to worry about running the economy, all you had to worry about was distribution.

I'm not knocking Tony Crosland, who was an honest Labour man who would never have left the Labour Party. He was a very able Labour man and his death was a tragedy. And Gaitskell, although he behaved excellently over Suez, probably far better than, say, Wilson would have behaved, was a disaster as a leader of the Labour Party. So our scepticism about the Labour leadership at the time was justified. Suez was in some sense much more important within the Labour Party, helping to crystallise the development of the Labour Left, but I don't think this affected us in the Communist Party very much.

One change I detect in your own work is that the first major contribution you made to post-1956 history, *Primitive Rebels*, takes much more interest in the archaeology, the prehistory of labour movements. And this is in some contrast to the essays you were writing in what became *Labouring Men*, which seemed to me labour history in a much more traditional sense. In what way do you think the political changes of those years affected your intellectual thinking about history?

I don't think they were labour history in the traditional sense to quite the extent you think. What I was trying to do at the time was to write labour history emancipated from being the history of organisations, to try and see it as the history of the working class. The kind of themes I took up in *Primitive Rebels* weren't in themselves new because I got on to them when I travelled in Italy through the experience of Communists there, particularly in peasant areas.

But I was concentrating on phenomena that clearly didn't fit in, though which were clearly part of social consciousness and all the rest. Also, I was exploring to what extent there were alternatives. And I'm bound to say that I came to the conclusion that whatever the alternatives were, the formation of an organised working class party, or an organised revolutionary party, was indispensable. If you read *Primitive Rebels* you will see there is, so to speak a subtext which is a polemic against anarchism and libertarianism, or against the kind of movements which deny the force of organisation. That doesn't mean necessarily you have to have a democratic centralist organisation, but nevertheless it was an argument for the necessity of organisation.

So do you think that for a future historian that might be the place where they find the reason why you stayed in whereas some other people left the party?

Organisation is not confined to the British Communist Party, so you can't say that.

But that was its great virtue.

It was its great virtue, sure, an enormous virtue. The virtues of the Communist Party, for instance as an organisation and schooling for workers, and indeed for intellectuals, were quite enormous. Those people who belonged to my generation, not just as intellectuals, but as workers, owe an extraordinary amount to the style, the way in which the Communist Party organised its work, with all its enormous weaknesses. Whether this explains why I stayed in the party and others left I really wouldn't know. I got into the communist movement a long, long time ago as a schoolboy in Berlin before Hitler came to power, and when you got politicised at the age of 14, and then stayed politicised for an awful long time, it's a long part of your life.

It's possible that if I had been expelled, which happened to a lot of people who thought like me in other parties, I would then have gone without too many regrets. Some regrets, though, nevertheless. I think the Communist Party has deserved well of the British people, with all the things that you can say about it, and I still think so indeed. Whatever its future may be, I think the net judgement on its role since 1920 in the history of the British working class is enormously positive.

So looking back, how would you now judge the decisions and events of 1956? For instance, what sort of turning point in the history of the international communist movement did it represent as opposed to what you thought, or wished, it might represent at the time?

We knew that it began to represent a potential break-up of the international communist movement, and that's what happened. There is no question that an international communist movement as it existed in my youth does not exist now. Insofar as there is international co-ordination between communist parties, which doesn't exist that often or that effectively, it is much more like what we've always criticised the Second International for being, namely polycentric, an organisation for exchanging views rather than, as we once thought, a single international army of the working class of which the national parties were sections under the international command. That has gone. That didn't survive, largely because this international leadership had been so identified with the Soviet Union and with a particular regime in the Soviet Union. And it simply did not survive. In fact it would be absurd to talk about an international communist movement today, whereas one could still talk of it up until 1956.

Is this a good thing? In spite of the nostalgia which some of us feel who came into what we thought of as an international army, probably it is. The general record of strategy dictated from international communist headquarters, wherever they claimed to be, is not impressive. And it is no bad thing that socialist movements now have to do their own thinking and can no longer rely on others to do it for them. ●

A fuller version of this interview will be shown as a video at Left Unlimited on 31 Oct-2 Nov.

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Dodging The Taxing Questions

Labour is slowly unveiling its new economic strategy. **John Grahl** and **Bob Rowthorn** argue that while its themes are very much in tune with the times, it just won't deliver the goods in practice. The intentions are fine, but who is going to pay for them?

As the complete failure of Mrs Thatcher's economic policies becomes almost impossible to disguise, the basis for a new, post-Thatcherite, consensus on economic policy is emerging. This consensus could bring together a considerable majority of the British people around the key priorities for national economic recovery: an immediate attack on unemployment and poverty, combined with a major long-term programme of investment and modernisation, centred on the rebuilding of manufacturing industry. The experience of the last eight years is convincing more and more British people that these objectives are simply incompatible with the unbridled individualism promoted by Conservative policy. They can be achieved only if the pursuit of individual interests is limited and controlled by a recognition of the common good.

This new mood is well expressed in Labour's new economic and social priorities – industrial regeneration, job-creation, increased expenditure on the social services and the amelioration of poverty. However, to judge by its recent policy statements and general performance, Labour's approach still falls well short of what is needed. Narrow electoral calculations, a preoccupation with immediate political advantage, and unwillingness to confront difficult issues have filled Labour statements with evasions, hesitations and ambiguities – restricting the ambition and scope of its objectives and reducing its chance of achieving them.

The reality is that Labour's achievement in these areas is likely to be quite inadequate because it is not prepared to take the necessary steps to ensure that sufficient resources are available, and to reduce the ability of international finance to wreck the whole project.

In this article we trace the consequences of these inadequacies through four key economic issues: taxation, incomes policy, nationalisation and finance.

'For electoral reasons, Labour's leadership have set their faces against any large-scale redistribution – as a consequence perspectives for tackling poverty have become gradualist in the extreme'

Industrial Policy

It is in the field of industrial policy that Labour has come closest to winning a new consensus for national economic recovery. The striking and imaginative campaign for 'jobs and industry' links together the issues of employment, industrial renewal and 'charters' for the most disadvantaged groups in the workforce. These themes are pursued through a range of policy questions – regional development, local enterprise, specific industrial sectors, training and youth employment, and so on. Together with Labour's forceful reaction to the debacles of Westland and the BL-General Motors deal, the campaign has dramatised the failure of Conservative industrial policy and commanded growing respect for Labour proposals, although these remain at a very general level.

The specific issue of nationalisation is clearly a very difficult one for Labour: its policies here are formulated under intense political and economic pressures. The present situation is that the very advanced demands for extended public ownership which appeared in Labour's programme in 1982 have been jettisoned because they are correctly perceived as a vote loser. For better or worse, nationalisation on such a scale is unpopular.

Whilst Labour can still expect to win considerable support for individual acts of nationalisation, for which there is a convincing economic justification acceptable to the electorate, it cannot hope to win comparable support for a programme of widespread nationalisation of the type favoured by the so-called hard Left. This is the reality facing Labour at the present time. The situation can, perhaps, be reversed in the future, but for Labour to run at the next election on such a radical programme would ensure defeat. Some Labour activists find this reality difficult to accept. Others are willing to pay such a price, but the majority are not, nor is the leadership. Instead, they have opted for a loose set of proposals for promoting 'social ownership.'

This is a general notion which embraces not only nationalisations but also producer co-ops, workers' share ownership schemes, the investment activities of local enterprise boards, regional development agencies, and publicly owned stakes in large private companies.

Proposals for a public stake in the financial sector are very limited: a British Savings Bank will bring together the existing Post Office Giro Bank with the National Savings service; a British Investment Bank will manage public investments in private industry. Nationalisation proposals as such cover little more than the re-nationalisation of British Telecom and British Gas, together perhaps with the taking over of a major drug company as

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called for by the last party conference. There are, however, plans for the expansion of existing public corporations, which will also be allowed to diversify into new activities. Potentially, this last proposal is the most radical of all and, if fully exploited, could greatly strengthen the economic leverage of the public sector.

In the industrial strategy which seems to be emerging Labour will use the notion of 'social ownership' to build certain social objectives into a programme of public support for industry. Support will be channelled to enterprises of all kinds through a range of national, regional and local agencies, taking the form of subsidies, public investment stakes and public purchasing. It will be directed towards job creation and all the aspects of industrial modernisation – research, investment, training, product development.

This seems to be a fruitful direction for industrial strategy. Under present conditions, it is a potential vote winner and could play a central role in reversing the country's industrial decline. It means, of course, accepting the continued importance of capitalist enterprise in our economy, but there really is not much alternative. The main problem is that the strategy is at present very diffuse. It will be necessary soon to be much more concrete – consultative documents will have to be replaced by policy statements, priorities will have to be determined, sums of money specified.

Here is where the difficulties will arise. To be effective Labour's industrial strategy requires a substantial increase in investment both to modernise the more backward parts of British industry and to increase productive capacity. It also requires expenditure in complementary areas such as the railways, technical education and the like. These expenditures will compete with Labour's other social and economic programmes for resources. Under a future Labour government the supply of resources will not be infinitely elastic. It will not be sufficient to support simultaneously an ambitious investment programme, a massive job creation programme, a large expansion of the social services, a big rise in welfare benefits, a substantial increase in wages and all the other desirable objectives Labour would like to achieve.

These objectives cannot be achieved simultaneously. Any attempt to do so will lead to a massive shortage of material goods, a balance of payments crisis and inflation. Since Labour has rightly declared itself the party of production, investment must take precedence and some of these objectives must be abandoned for the time being, or at least scaled down. The question is which objectives? It is to this question we now turn.

'Fine words and, no doubt, sincerely felt. But what do they mean in practice? The answer is precious little'

Poverty and Taxation

At a purely technical level it is hard to fault Labour's policies against poverty. Public expenditure will be used to expand employment, more will be spent on the social services, a national minimum wage will be introduced to cover full-time and part-time workers, and welfare benefits – in particular the child allowance – will be increased.

The measures could indeed represent a major attack on poverty if they were implemented thoroughly and with sufficient funding. But Labour has carefully avoided any such commitments. The target for unemployment has been kept as modest as possible: a reduction of one million over two years with an eventual commitment to provide a job opportunity for all the long-term unemployed.

No effective programme against poverty is feasible without a major redistribution of income. For electoral reasons, Labour's leadership have set their faces against any large-scale redistribution – as a consequence their perspectives for tackling poverty have become gradualist in the extreme. In the realm of taxation Labour proposes to redistribute only the £3.5 billion which the richest 5% have gained from Tory tax handouts. This will be clawed back and used for a first round increase in welfare benefits.

There is to be no increase in tax rates beyond this. No-one earning less than £27,000 a year, it is often said, would be worse off as a result of Labour's tax proposals. This is an exaggeration, because it ignore changes in the rules governing national insurance. Even so, it remains true that the bulk of middle income earners – the ordinary middle class and upper working class – will pay virtually no extra tax at all on their current incomes.

One only has to divide the extra £3.5 billion tax revenue by the 16 million British people living near or below the poverty line to appreciate the inadequacy of Labour's policy which may end up as little more than a gesture. It works out at just over £4 per week per head.

In his speech to the party conference Neil Kinnock said that Labour would mobilise a compassionate 'moral majority', a majority which opposed the meanness of Toryism and abominated its dual standards. Labour would 'bind the wounds of the nation'. Fine words and, no doubt, sincerely felt. Neil Kinnock obviously feels passionately on the subject of poverty and inequality. But what do they mean in practice? The answer is precious little. If the idea of compassion means anything at all, it means sacrifice. It means that the better off members of the compassionate majority – not just a tiny handful at the very top but a substantial fraction of this majority – must give up something to help those worse off than themselves.

Without such a sacrifice, the very idea of compassion is devoid of meaning, and Neil Kinnock's words are empty rhetoric. Yet Labour makes no call whatsoever for sacrifice from the middle income earners who form such a crucial part of this supposedly compassionate majority. On the contrary, its tax proposals are explicitly designed to avoid any additional tax on the average middle income earner. There may be some shuffling around of income within this group – from middle income earners without children to those with children for example – but no transfer of income between this group as a whole towards the poorer members of society.

As far as taxation is concerned, few people conventionally described as working class and relatively few members of the ordinary middle class will be expected to make any sacrifice at all to help the poor and the unemployed. In the short run, the entire tax burden of the anti-poverty programme will be on the shoulders of the top 5% of income earners. In the longer run, it is hoped that economic growth will eliminate poverty by providing jobs for the unemployed and yield more tax revenue to finance government welfare programmes. In the meantime, the poor will have to be content with the £4 a week they get from the rich.

The excuse Labour gives for taxing only the rich is that total taxes have already been increased under the Tories on everyone except the top 5%. This is true but misleading. It ignores completely the large increase in real earnings which has occurred under the Thatcher government for many of those fortunate enough to keep their jobs. Despite the underlying decline in the British economy, average post-tax real eanings have risen by more than 18% since 1979. This is more than in any other Western country, including Japan.

It is, of course, an overall figure. For manual employees the increase has averaged maybe 12% whilst for non-manual emloyees the average is over 20%. Even so, the fact remains that a considerable number of people in employment, especially middle income earners, have received a very large increase in their post-tax incomes. Meanwhile, welfare benefits have risen at a much slower rate, or sometimes even fallen, and millions of people have been thrust into poverty by unemployment, by casualisation and by wage cuts among the lowest paid workers.

Labour's plans will hardly begin to reverse the massive increase in inequality among working people that unemployment and casualisation have produced during the Thatcher era. Such a reversal cannot be financed simply by a squeeze on the very highest incomes; it also requires redistribution from middle incomes towards the poor of every variety. Labour could, of

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course, be even tougher on the rich, especially those who live primarily on unearned income, but this would not in itself be sufficient.

The rich may be an affront to our sense of justice and their existence certainly makes it more difficult to call for sacrifices from the average person. But the amount of resources they actually consume is relatively small, and even a punitive assault on their incomes would not provide sufficient revenue to finance a really effective programme of job creation and welfare benefits.

For example, suppose that in addition to the measures already proposed by Labour, there was to be an absolute ceiling such that no-one could receive a post-tax income more than three times the average. This would be quite a radical measure, perhaps too radical because it might drive out of the country many top professionals, industrial managers and others upon whom our future prosperity depends. Even so, it is doubtful whether such a step would raise more than another £2 billion or so over and above the £3.5 billion arising from measures already proposed by Labour.

Thus, whilst Labour's proposed policy towards top incomes, especially unearned incomes, could and should be tougher, the extra resources thereby acquired would be relatively small. The income of the rich, however highly taxed, is simply not great enough to finance the additional welfare benefits and job creation required to make a fundamental attack on poverty, whilst at the same time increasing public investment and expanding the social services. The fact is this can only be done by taxing middle incomes more heavily.

Labour leaders are well aware of the above criticisms and they would probably like to raise taxes on middle incomes. But this is not what they advocate. On the contrary, they have attacked the SDP for its courageous suggestion that middle income earners should help finance the anti-poverty programme. The SDP tax proposals, it is true, have several weaknesses. For example, they are softer on the rich than Labour's proposals, and they rely more heavily on selective means-tested benefits than do those of Labour, which lean more towards universal provision. On both counts they deserve to be criticised.

However, this does not alter the fact that the SDP is right to call for a transfer of income from middle incomes to the poor and low paid. In this respect their tax proposals are clearly more egalitarian than those of Labour. They embody a conception of social solidarity which is absent from the Labour programme whose slogan is 'Tax the rich and give to the poor, but leave the middle well alone'.

'This does not alter the fact that the SDP is right to call for a transfer of income from middle incomes to the poor and low paid'

Labour and Incomes Policy

A strongly redistributive tax structure is one pre-condition for achieving Labour's economic and social objectives: industrial regeneration, the elimination of poverty, job creation and expansion in the social services. Even more crucial is an effective incomes policy.

During the initial years of the Labour government there is bound to be a severe shortage of material goods. Investment will be increased, more will be spent on the social services, employment will be increased, minimum wages will be established for low-paid workers, welfare benefits will be raised. All of these measures will increase the demand for material goods. Up to a point the available supply of such goods can be increased by raising domestic production or importing additional goods from abroad.

However, given the depletion of British industry under the Thatcher government, and the adverse international environment, there is limited scope for such an increase. Hopefully, the situation will change when Labour's investment and modernisation programme bears fruit and new supplies of material goods become available. However, this will take some years and in the meantime Labour's various economic and social programmes will have to compete with other claims on the limited material goods available.

Of these claims, by far the most important is the consumption of wage and salary earners, especially those in the middle range of incomes – the upper working class and the ordinary middle class. It is the consumption of these people which will determine how far Labour can fulfil its economic and social objectives. Whilst there is some scope for squeezing the rich even further than Labour proposes, the crucial factor is what happens to the upper 50% or so of wage and salary earners. The faster the incomes of these people rise in real terms, the greater will be their consumption and the less material goods will be available for other purposes.

To be realistic, the real incomes of this group must virtually be frozen for several years if Labour is to meet its existing targets. Any substantial increase in the real incomes received by this group will make it quite impossible to achieve Labour's targets. Some or all of the major programmes will have to be curtailed. The anti-poverty programme, inadequate though it is, may have to be cut back; plans for more industrial investment or expansion in the social services may have to be frozen; emergency job creation may have to be abandoned.

Thus, if Labour is to achieve its targets, incomes in the upper half of the pay range will have to rise at rates close to zero for a period of several years. This will involve a sharp break with the Thatcher years during which real incomes for many who have kept their jobs have risen rapidly, despite a virtual stagnation in total output. This rise has been made possible through massive job-shedding which has concentrated an almost stationary total income in the hands of fewer people. This rise in wage and salary incomes, in spite of growing unemployment, has disoriented many erstwhile devotees of the free market who have been driven to contemplate radical interference with the wage-setting process.

Labour's leaders and their economic advisers are quite aware of the dangers of rapid wage growth and its possible effects on Labour's programme. Any sustained and substantial rise in average earnings will either force the abandonment of Labour's programme, or provoke much higher inflation, or, quite possibly both: the anguished realisation of this can be read between the lines of all the joint TUC-LP documents, but the Labour leadership have lacked the courage to spell it out. Implicity, it is recognised that every major commitment by Labour is contingent on a successful policy of major restraint, although the need for this is never explicitly argued. Labour should be making it crystal-clear to the whole population that to achieve its wider objectives (for example, a minimum wage set at a *decent* level) it will need to restrain the wages and salaries of the better-paid. Instead of this, the Labour leadership is hoping to administer restraint through the back door. In a worryingly familiar way, it is proposing a national economic assessment by a Labour government and the TUC leadership. In this way, it is hoped, the trade union leadership can be persuaded of the need for restraint and will agree to hold back wages.

What is worrying about this scenario is not the fact that it is really an incomes policy in disguise – a fact which sends many of our more blinkered comrades into apoplexy. Rather, it is the secretive, underhand way it is all being carried out. Instead of arguing openly and politically about the need for restraint, and educating public opinion both inside and outside of the labour movement, the party leadership is relying on its special relationship with the trade union leaders to deliver the goods when the time comes.

This is not only very undemocratic, it is also foolish. Many trade union activists, who believe there will be no incomes policy, will be disillusioned to find that they have one in disguise. Equally important is the attitude of the ordinary trade union member and those not in trade unions. With practically no warning, many of them may be asked to accept a virtual freeze in their real incomes – or even a reduction – in the 'national' interest.

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In the event, they may go along with it, but one cannot be sure. It is immeasurably easier to call for sacrifices or restraint if people have been prepared in advance, if they know what the issues are. If this is not the case, they may simply refuse to co-operate and the whole project may collapse in ruins. Yet Labour has made little effort to prepare people for what lies ahead.

Certainly, Labour talks endlessly about the desperate plight of the economy and the nation, but there is virtually no mention of the fact that to put this right will require sacrifices, an end to the kind of wage and salary increases which have occurred in recent years under the Tories. Labour leaders are, of course, well aware of this self-evident truth and occasional hints in this direction appear in their speeches and documents. But these are merely hints and, so far, they have completely failed to confront the question openly.

What is required is a stark, simple statement of the realities facing our country and what they mean for wages and salaries. There is simply no room for large wage and salary increases except for the low paid and, perhaps, a few special cases amongst the better-off, like teachers, to whom the Tories may already have made commitments before Labour comes into office.

Income Patterns Under Thatcherism

Post-Tax Real Earnings in the UK

Source: *Monthly Digest of Statistics*

Average earnings index divided by the official tax and price index in June of each year.

This graph shows what has happened to real post-tax earnings in the UK since 1979. After stagnating in the early years of the Thatcher government, they have risen extremely fast subsequently. Information is given separately for manufacturing and the economy as a whole. (The real earnings shown here are derived by making allowance for the effects of both inflation *and* income tax changes.)

Real Monthly Earnings in Manufacturing

% change 1979 – 1st quarter 1986

US	–3.9
Canada	+0.8
Japan	+11.7
France	+8.6
Germany	+3.0
Italy	+10.7
UK	+18.1

Source: *National Institute Economic Review*

Adjusted for inflation, but not for the changes in income tax.

This table shows what has happened to real earnings in manufacturing industry in the major Western countries. It shows how, despite the abysmal performance of manufacturing industry in the UK, real wages for those fortunate enough to keep their jobs have risen much faster in the UK since 1979 than in any other major Western country. (The figures shown refer to hourly pay after making allowance for inflation. No allowance is made for changes in income tax which have occurred during this period.)

Employment and Earnings in UK Manufacturing Industry

% change 1979 – 1986 (June of each year)

Output	–9.0
Employment	–25.7
Output per employee	+18.4
Post-tax real earnings	+19.9

Source: *Monthly Digest of Statistics*

These figures show what has happened to output, employment and earnings in UK manufacturing. Total output has fallen since 1979. However, the fall in employment has been much greater with the result that output/worker has increased. This increase in output/worker has allowed firms to increase real wages by a very large amount on average. Within the former manufacturing workforce there has been a huge redistribution of income. Some people have gained enormously through higher wages financed by higher productivity, but the cost of this has been mass unemployment and a dramatic fall in income for those who have lost their jobs. What we see in this table is the divisive effects of Thatcherism on the working class: prosperity for some purchased at the price of poverty for others.

'If Labour is to achieve its targets, income in the upper half of the pay range will have to rise at rates close to zero for several years'

Finance and the City

Labour's shadow chancellor, Roy Hattersley, recently claimed that' 'Labour is the party of production; Labour will be the government of production'. Our argument has been that Labour's stance on economic questions is very far from making good this boast. Labour's attitude to financial constraints is another example of its failure to meet the challenge of a thoroughgoing renewal of Britain's productive system.

One of the greatest obstacles today to the development of production lies in the financial pressures produced on a world scale by economic slowdown. This is part of the pathology of capitalist economic systems: any major disequilibrium or widespread uncertainty in the productive structure releases a huge drive into the safety of financial assets.

In the last decade the whole focus of Western economies has been displaced from industrial systems to financial markets and this imposes huge burdens on productive reconstruction: very high interest rates, enormous volatility in foreign exchange and other financial markets, crises of international debt.

These are global forces which impose constraints on all national governments – limits to the reduction of interest rates and the growth of public borrowing. Labour has accepted that it will be unable to finance its spending plans through borrowing in which it envisages only a minor increase.

But this recognition makes its refusal to raise taxes all the more damaging. Given the enormous pressures that a Labour government will be under to relax Conservative spending contraints on local authorities, on public services and on public sector pay, Labour's present plans to make only small adjustments in public borrowing and tax revenue are bound to produce a severe shortage of finance for the recovery programme. Tory claims that Labour will go on a spending spree are exactly wrong – what is alarming is the continuity of Labour's monetary and fiscal policies with those of the present government.

In Britain, financial dangers – for instance foreign exchange crises, very high interest rates, or violent disturbances in financial markets – are much sharper because of the concentration of international financial institutions in the City of London.

We agree with the widely held view on the Left that the most powerful of the financial institutions are essentially an *enclave* – they are not a national economic force because they will always put their global freedom of manoeuvre before their links with British industry. Increasingly they have little to gain from a specifically British economic recovery.

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The internationalisation of its interests, however, does not lessen the City's political and ideological weight in British life which is now, ironically, strengthened by the fact that it has prospered enormously in the same years that have seen a decimation of British industrial enterprise. The City and international finance are, in fact, the only bloc of economic interests which continues to benefit from Thatcherite economic policies. Tax reductions, deregulations and the release of market forces have ceased to be a defensible strategy for national economic recovery but they still underpin the speculative asset markets which generate profits for financial capital.

'If this is not the case, they may simply refuse to co-operate and the whole project may collapse in ruins. Yet Labour has made almost no effort to prepare people for what lies ahead'

Here again, Labour has a very sophisticated understanding of the problem which Roy Hattersley has described in virtually marxist terms: 'We are the world's largest international banking centre and have the biggest foreign exchange market. This tradition of international business', Hattersley says, 'has its origins in our imperial past – the feature of our history which for one hundred years diverted our attention from domestic investment and therefore contributed to our more recent decline. Now our position can only be maintained by allowing overseas banks and financial institutions to colonise London'. 'No one', he adds, 'should make the mistake of believing that successes for the City are necessarily of benefit to the economy or the nation as a whole ... the encouragement of the economic environment in which the City thrives – high interest rates and an over-valued pound – has contributed to the long-term decline of the ... economy as a whole.'

The clarity of this analysis, however, is combined with an almost complete pessimism and defeatism in the sphere of practical policy. Mr Hattersley has argued for a somewhat stricter regulation of financial transactions. This is a reform which is almost needed by the City itself, so badly has its reputation been tainted by recent scandals and frauds.

In economic terms, however, Labour seeks only to assuage the forces of finance. The calculation is that, beyond a few very limited interventions, nothing can be done, certainly no general controls would be introduced. Addressing institutional investors in New York, Mr Hattersley even went so far as to say that exchange controls in Britain had become an impossibility. The implication is that an elected government is so weak *vis-à-vis* the big banks that Labour could not deploy an elementary instrument of monetary policy which exists today in several West European countries.

What Labour proposes is to remove the tax advantages currently enjoyed by pension funds and insurance companies which hold more than a certain proportion of their assets overseas. They will be encouraged to buy British government securities in place of foreign assets and the proceeds will finance loans to industry through a British Investment Bank.

Since the policy has been put forward in a somewhat demagogic way it is important to stress the very limited nature of this intervention (it is not, as Hattersley misleadingly refers to it, a *control*.) The operation offers only a marginal shift of the constraints imposed by Britain's deteriorating trade performance. The illustrative figures presented in one Labour Party document suggest that a once-for-all repatriation of some £20 billion would be gradually induced over a period of years. Such a measure would give no defence against a sudden run on sterling which, as the recent example of Australia and past experience of Labour governments in the UK have shown, could easily occur under a Labour government once it lost the 'confidence' of international finance.

The tax disadvantages of overseas assets – for those institutions affected by the policy – would certainly be outweighed by the overnight gains they could make if the sterling exchange rate collapsed. Nor would the measure do anything to protect the UK economy from foreign investors, whose importance has increased enormously in recent years.

This fatalistic approach is likely to cost industry dear since it makes it difficult to defend the productive structure from the turbulence, high interest rates and short-term calculation which prevail in the financial sector.

We have no wish to trivialise a complex problem. There are manifold difficulties in limiting the power of financial institutions and no conceivable policies can today completely insulate national industry from international finance in the way some countries have achieved in the past. However, this is no excuse for passivity. Because exchange controls would not be perfect, this does not mean they would be useless.

In promising not to introduce controls Labour is giving a hostage to fortune which it may come to regret bitterly in the future. Hopefully, this is one promise that it will renege on when the time comes. Exchange controls, it should be noted moreover, are consistent with participation in international arrangements such as the European Monetary System and are not simply a recipe for isolationism.

Britain is in a mess. The country's manufacturing base is weak, North Sea oil revenues have collapsed, there is a looming balance of payments crisis, the social services are in decline, millions of people are unemployed and there is widespread poverty. In tackling these problems, a future Labour government will face a formidable challenge. On present showing, Labour does not measure up to this challenge. In some directions, such as industrial policy, its plans are imaginative and potentially effective. However they may be frustrated by failings in other directions.

Labour has pledged itself not to increase tax rates on middle incomes. This will severely restrict the amount of resources available to the Labour government for its industrial regeneration programme and to meet its other social and economic objectives. The promise not to increase such taxes has already been made and it is now probably too late to go back on it. This makes it even more imperative to confront the question of incomes policy. One of the biggest threats to Labour's social and economic programme comes from unrestrained increases for the middle and upper range of salary earners. Given the present appalling state of the British economy, any significant increase in this type of income will lead to an escalating economic crisis and make it impossible for Labour to achieve its objectives, which have already been scaled down to a supposedly 'realistic' minimum. Labour leaders are quite aware of this dilemma but they have so far failed to speak out openly on the question.

What is required is not hints and innuendos but a vigorous propaganda campaign to convince both the general public and trade union activists of the need for an incomes policy and restraint for the better paid. This campaign should begin now. If action is left until after the election it may be too late.

Another area of weakness concerns international finance and the City of London. No one expects Labour to come out publicly in favour of exchange controls. This would merely lead to a huge sterling crisis if it looked as though Labour was going to win the election. What is required is for Labour to impose exchange controls as soon as it takes office, whilst denying this invention beforehand. Such denials may seem like hypocrisy to some, but in fact it is normal behaviour in the realm of international finance. No one ever announces in advance that they will impose exchange controls, and it would be foolish for Labour to behave any differently. What is worrying, however, is that Labour leaders seem to have accepted the fabulous argument that exchange controls are no longer possible now that we live in an electronic age. As a result they will have no means whatsoever of shielding the British economy from the pressures of financial speculation, and their entire programme will be at the mercy of international finance.

Unless these problems are tackled a future Labour government may be crushed between the forces of sectional and economistic militancy and international finance. If this happens, it will be a blow from which Labour may never recover. ●

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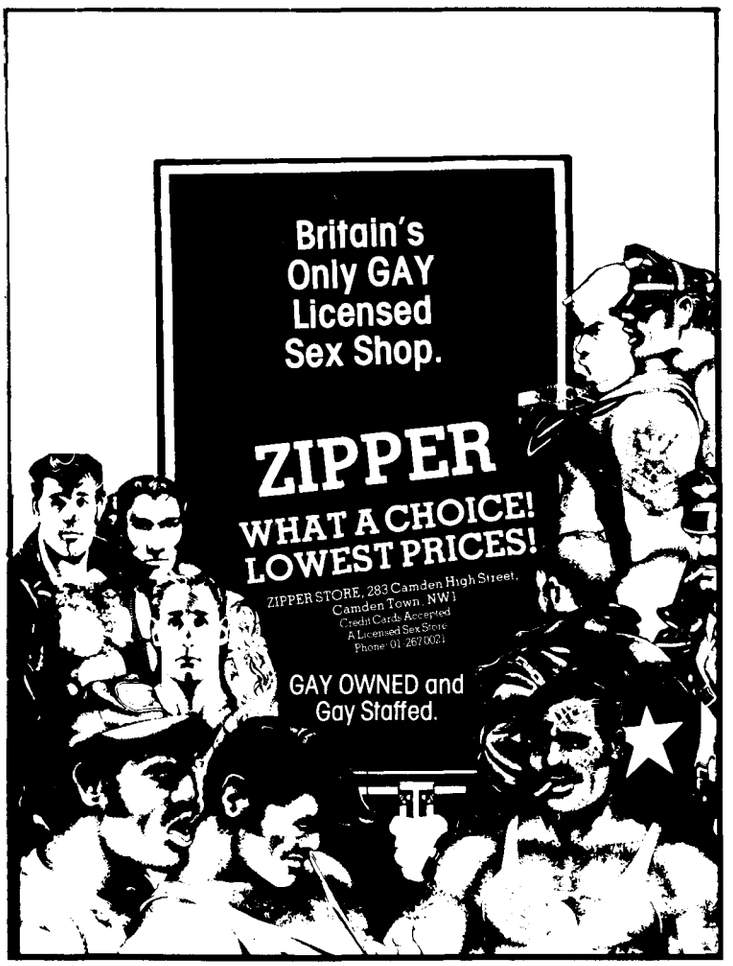

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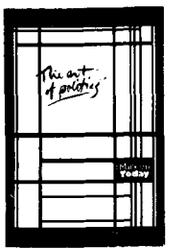

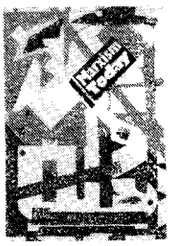

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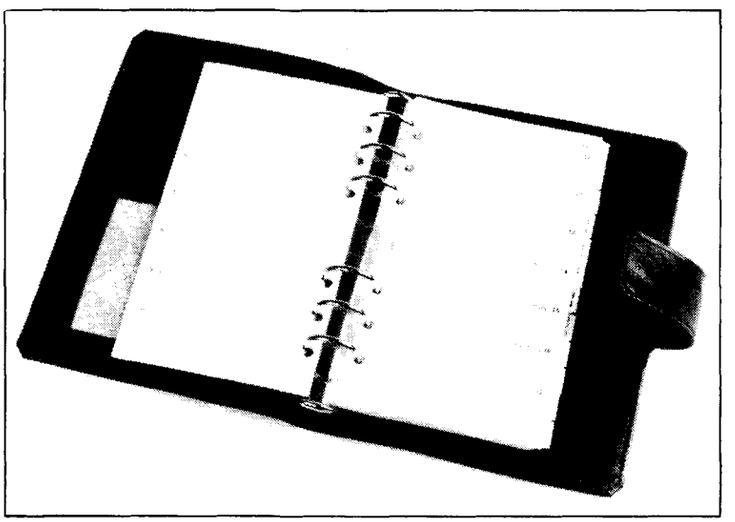

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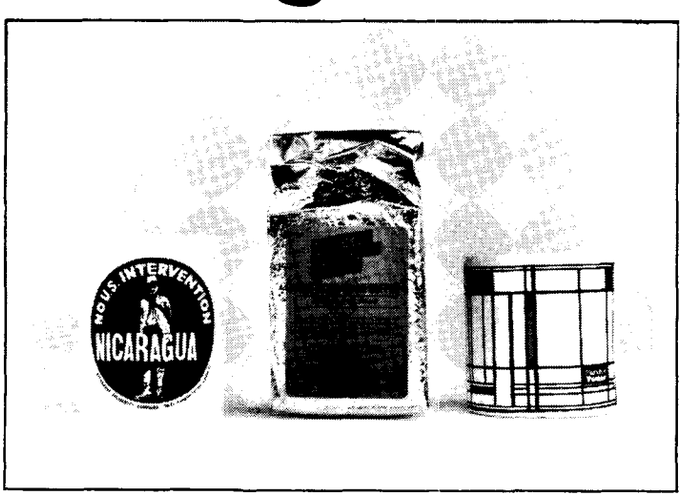

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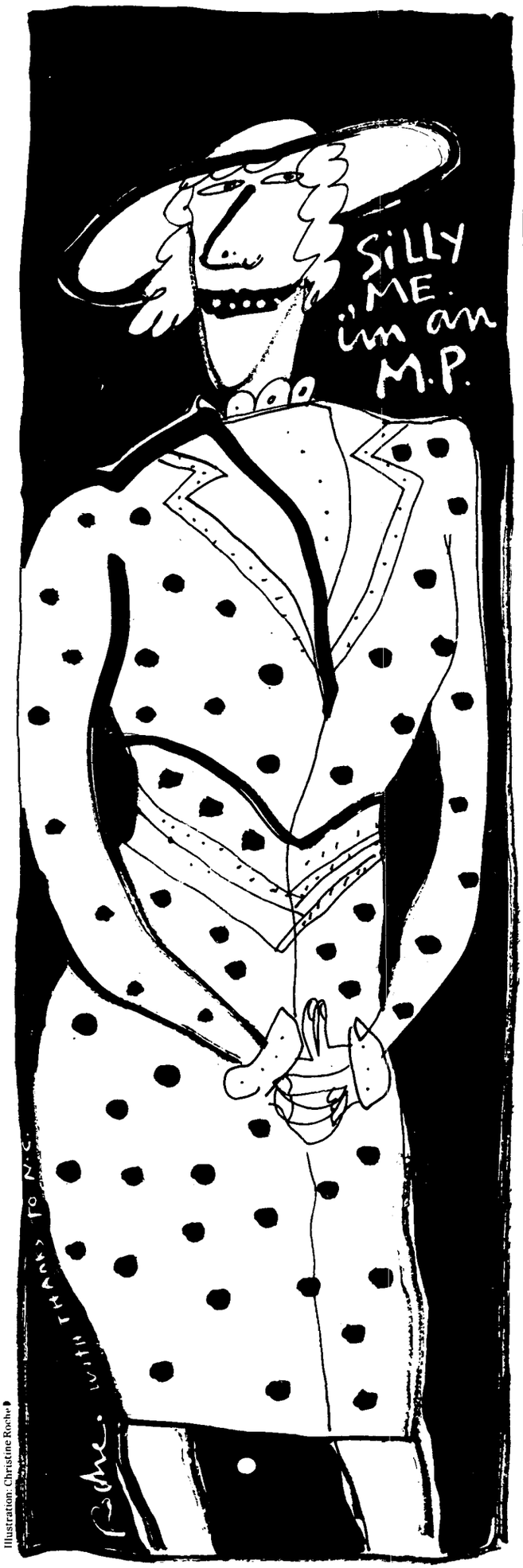

Illustration: Christine Roche

Women in The Mainstream

A Roundtable Discussion

A new generation of women are taking up office in the labour movement. They're moving into the mainstream. They are no longer outsiders. But do they feel powerful?

The participants in the roundtable are: Tricia Davis who works for a public sector trade union and is on the Communist Party's National Women's Advisory; Gaynor Legal who is a Labour councillor in Cardiff and is a black activist and social worker; Inez McCormack, who is a trade union organiser in Northern Ireland; Frances Morrell who is leader of the Inner London Education Authority; and Clare Short who is Labour MP for Birmingham Ladywood. The discussion was chaired by Beatrix Campbell a member of *Marxism Today*'s editorial board.

I would like you all to introduce yourselves to give people some idea of who you are and what has been your political trajectory.

Frances How a working class girl from the North ends up as leader of ILEA! I suppose I left the North after my formal education to come to London to see the world. In London I became involved in politics working for the National Union of Students in the late 60s, early 70s – a time which most people remember as a great period of student unrest. I was then hired by Tony Benn to be his policy adviser when he was Secretary of State for Industry and then for Energy. I worked for five years in the 74–79 Labour government. After that I did two things: firstly I became a member of the CLDP executive and took part in the battle to democratise the party. Secondly I thought I would get back in touch with real life by becoming a local councillor. And then I got elected to the GLC and ILEA.

Being a mother has been very important to me. As feminists, many women politicians have the confidence to be positive about motherhood. A home can be a loving institution where human values are maintained. This forces you to refer to the genuine human values, and you don't just get totally absorbed in the brutal political jungle.

Gaynor I come from a very large, mixed up extended family in Cardiff and I came into mainstream politics through black politics and the black power movement in America. I became involved in forming pressure groups. And then I joined the Labour Party and about three years later was asked to stand as a candidate for Bute Town (or Tiger Bay) in Cardiff which has a long-standing black community. I was the second black councillor in Wales. My education began well after I left school. I went to a local school where children went in at 4½ and left at 15, but half way through my education the system changed and it became a primary school so I left, and having failed the 11-plus, went to a secondary modern school.

When I left school I went through the caring professions – I did nursery nurse training and then I became a social worker and that's where I am today.

My daughter was born when I was only 19. So we grew up together and whilst I was becoming involved in politics and finding out about myself, she was being dragged along. Consequently, she won't go anywhere near a demo and her ambition is to have a house without books and paper in it. But we're very good friends and she's my most astute critic.

Tricia I also come from a working class family but one where there was a very traditional respect for education and ideas. I suppose I was told that either I was going to crack it or it would

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crack me. This has been very important for who I am because I feel very distant from parts of the Left which see 'intellectual' as being a dirty word. Another aspect of me that is important is that I am part of that generation which grew up with the women's movement in the 70s. That was important to me in two senses: firstly, it was like having a veil drawn back, suddenly seeing that kind of analysis of women's oppression, being able to make sense of lots of different bits of my own and other women's lives. This made politics seem possible for women, and for me as a woman, in a way that I'd just never felt was possible previously. Secondly, the women's movement was crucial in defining who I am, as a mother, particularly in the sense that it made me feel that there's a kind of feminism which is about getting your own life in order and about taking responsibilities for others.

Inez I come from a loyalist background. My father was a printer and we lived in a reasonably middle class area. I left school and home at 16 and went to work for the civil service, where I got a wage with which I could feed myself. And I tried to get to university, not for the education but to try and escape from a stultifying job. I went right through university and into a career, and I came out just as bewildered and incapable of coming to terms with the separation between ideas and action. Through a combination of circumstances I ended up in Belfast in 68/69, in the civil rights marches and I became radicalised.

I married. My husband came from Bogside, a Catholic community, and in the North that's like moving to another country. I had to make a complete new set of relationships. I got a job in social work and became accidentally involved in NUPE because we got threatened with the sack. I then became an organiser. What changed my life was when the women's movement came into being – it enabled me to make sense of the politics of practice, which was my job, and to draft 'women's' methods into trade union organisation. The other thing that helps to define me is the fact that I am a mother. My daughter is the joy of my life, and a living reminder of the link between the personal and political.

Clare I was born in Birmingham, in Handsworth, my constituency. My father was a teacher who came from Northern Ireland and was left wing. He felt most strongly that Britain shouldn't be in Northern Ireland. My mother also has Irish roots. Her family came to Birmingham from Ireland during the potato famine.

When I found out that people like us could go to university it seemed pretty unbelievable but I thought I'd like to try. I found I could study the thing that I find most interesting – political science. After that I went into the Home Office. I was appointed to be a private secretary first to a Tory, and then a Labour minister. During that period I had two significant experiences. One was that I found I couldn't stay in the civil service because I wasn't neutral and I knew it. The other was that MPs and ministers are not impressive at all. I would *never* have thought of myself as being somebody like an MP until I had discovered this.

What strikes me about everything that you have all said is that every one of you starts from a sense of exclusion. You've all travelled a road that's about politics – politics is the means by which you belong to society.

Frances I have never got over the lives my parents had to lead. I retain a deep anger against the kind of institutional arrangements that produce those kinds of conditions. So I want to be part of some process which actually challenges power. That's my reason for wanting to be part of the Labour Party.

Gaynor I think there's still a wish to be involved in politics because whether it's in a political party or in a trade union, politics is about power and about change. I came into the Labour Party via the black power movement which was about breaking into the power structure.

Inez To me the sense of exclusion that I felt as a child growing up came from not being able to fit into the world in which I lived, which was very claustrophobic and right-wing. Although that sense of exclusion may have damaged one's capacity to contribute at that stage, in many ways it helped shape my view of what power is.

What is interesting is when you get the confidence to fight this exclusion. It was the women's movement which defined the capacity I knew I had within me. It was a capacity which had until then been defined as something unacceptable, a bit freaky.

There's a sense in which all of you are in the mainstream; so the question of power and access is centrally on the agenda. And yet you've all started from a position of powerlessness and the route that you've travelled is to do with an engagement with power and a refusal, if you like, both at the personal level, and at the political level, of powerlessness.

Clare The way you put it was as though it was a personal sense of exclusion and a search for personal belonging or personal power. And that's absolutely not the way it was, or is, for me. It's more a discovery that everything's wrong, and that the instrument for helping to make it better is politics.

I wasn't saying you lot are all dispossessed and, like the mafiosi, you went into politics to make a few bob. I would like to explore the difference between the way politics took some of you directly into the Labour Party, and the way some remain with the new politics that was being invented in your own time – the politics of black liberation, women's liberation, Irish liberation. What were the limits of the politics of those movements, that took you into representative democracy?

Gaynor: 'I came into mainstream politics through black politics and the black power movement in America.'

Gaynor I am certainly nowhere near reaching the limits of black politics which has separate aims and objectives from the white politics of Britain. This is where I separate from the mainstream.

I'm also confused by what is called feminism in Britain. When I became involved in politics we came to the conclusion that first and foremost the race issue was the one that had to be taken on board. When I began talking with feminists I found the things they said strange because I came from such a different starting point.

How do you organise that tension in your own life between your relationship to black politics and a black world and the culture of the Labour Party?

Gaynor That's a very involved question for me, because I represent an area which is seen nationally as a black community, but which in fact has changed to the extent that there are now more white people than black living in the docks. But it's still viewed from the outside as a black community and my main concern and interest is still with black issues. However, within the docks – and I include myself – there's still a strong feeling that, black or white, if you're from the docks you stick together against the common enemy which is the society outside, which deprived the area of so much for its entire history. I tend to be involved at two levels – community politics and the politics of the Labour Party – which unfortunately are very different.

Tricia, you had a background in the women's movement, outside of the mainstream.

Tricia The Labour Party was the political backdrop of my childhood and adolescence. I wasn't particularly aware of other options. Not that I wanted to join it because it didn't seem to relate to me. It related to lots of things that I thought were very important, but it didn't seem to relate to me. I had tried to join the Labour Party and nobody came to see me so I gave up. I just thought that's it, they're full up.

So in a sense becoming involved in the women's movement wasn't a choice, because there didn't seem to be any others. It was a space that was available and seemed relevant and you didn't have to have a card. I suppose what I've learned from it is just a continuation of the process which took me into it: that if people care about things and are given space in which to

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Tricia: 'We've got to be able to recognise our sense of power where it does exist.'

express that care and concern, and to be involved, and not simply to be told what they're concerned about, and used, if you like, to back up other people's involvement, then they can do the most amazing things. That's my experience of the women's movement.

That's a valuable asset to have when working through the institutions because so much of the work that we do – in your cases in the Labour Party, in my case in the trade union movement – is very bureaucratic and does involve going to lots of meetings, lots of committees, taking lots of decisions on behalf of people. It's so important in all this not to lose sight of the need to involve people, the need to allow them to express their concerns, not to grab their issue and run with it, if you like.

But having said that, since I do spend much of my political life working for a trade union now, I must have thought there were limitations with the women's movement. I think they were to do with several things. Firstly, it was to do with feeling that the women's movement in the late 70s wasn't holding together any more, and feeling that a more coherent force was needed. For me that force was both the trade union movement and the Communist Party. It was quite specific, related to a moment in time – to the election of Thatcher in 1979. More generally, it was to do with thinking that the women's movement wasn't addressing itself sufficiently to working class women. The trade union movement seemed to provide a forum within which it was possible to try and explore that problem. And insofar as I made a choice – I'd say that's what my choices were.

Inez: 'I experience the exercise of power through the barrel of the gun . . . through the beating up of people on picket lines.'

What about you, Inez? The Irish dimension must make a big difference.

Inez Yes, I've got to come to the answer in a different way. I was trying to think of what excited me then and what excites me now which are very different things. There is no doubt about it that in the 60s the Irish civil rights movement was at its height. We were challenging power structures which you saw toppling around you. Stormont fell and for a period of three or four months you really thought you were going to change the world. That feeling of power was there. I think it was sweeping through Europe at that time. I do profoundly believe that that has had a ripple-on effect for a lot of people who went through the 60s wherever they were – the involvement in direct action, the knowledge of experiencing the brutality of state power without mediation. People's motivations come out very clearly into the open. I learnt a lot in that. You had the knowledge that you were dangerous, you had a recognition that a lot of those who were trying to hold you back were allegedly on your side.

The limits were the lack of responsibility. The limits were the assumptions that you represented a constituency without really being responsible to it or working with it very deeply and enabling it to represent itself. The politics that I feel have developed from my job have been the strengths of practice in enabling my members to challenge themselves. I'm very sure now that power is enshrined not in a position but in practice. In the taking of power it is the practice of how you take it, and the practice of how it's held on to, that is as important as the power itself. And I don't think I could have learnt that lesson without the experience of the women's movement. My route through the women's movement brought emotional strength and enabled me to understand and make sense of what I was and who I was. I learned about domination, its practice, and the relationships based on hidden dominations.

The deep excitement I feel in my own work now is when I see one of my members taking off. This empowering process comes not from power where it is traditionally thought to reside in the movement, but from going out, digging deep and using methods of organisation that are relevant to the daily lives of your members. My politics were built on doing that, and I now have the confidence to know that is what truly challenges powerlessness.

You're all in institutions, or you all work for organisations, that give you power. Do you feel that you've got power and do you feel that the institutions that you're in either give you power or have power that you can do something with?

Frances Can I offer a definition of power. Of course institutions have power. They're not omnipotent, but they have power. And with any particular institution the point is to have access to the power that that institution actually has. That power can be maximised or minimised, but it's there. But that of course is not incompatible with the idea that those who might want to oppose that institution, for example from the outside, are also powerful. I've got hard and fast views about power. I do feel I know exactly what it is and what I want to do and how to do it. If Mrs Thatcher wants to break up the ILEA, it is my job to organise a campaign to stop her doing it. She has the power to do it. Accordingly it is my task, from a much weaker position than the prime minister of the United Kingdom, to organise a popular campaign in London which will cause her not to do it. That is precisely what we did. We maximised our power, as it were, against her greater power.

But do you all feel that within your institutions you have power?

Frances The Labour group certainly have, but as an individual I have little power.

Why do you feel you haven't?

Clare I know I haven't, although most people think that MPs have power. I have certain things that are useful, in terms of working for my constituents. If I write a letter people get the things they might not otherwise. But in terms of the House of Commons, you can make speeches, have a platform that's important, what you say is amplified and many people hear it – but that's it. Of course, in terms of the Labour Party I have some power, for example I have my views about how we ought to win office next time. It is important to be aware of the power you don't have. My parliamentary experience has taught me that even a Labour government's power will be limited; because all kinds of constraints exist – the Americans, the finance houses and the press. So I conclude that the only real power is the people who understand and are agitating with us. That is where the power is.

Frances I don't agree with Clare. I had the privilege of working for Tony Benn when he was Secretary of State for Industry. He was in the cabinet but didn't have the support of the prime minister, which is not a strong position, but he certainly maximised his power. In a sense he established a whole set of ideas about the way we should go forward in terms of industrial policy, which is extremely important today. I really think that the Parliamentary Labour Party, in power, is much more powerful than its actions would suggest. Its political will is less than its power.

Clare Sure. But I am not Tony Benn and we are not in government and I am not Secretary of State for Industry. I am talking about my sense of the power that I have.

Frances Well I assume we exercise collective power. That to me is the important point.

Gaynor I find the whole question very confusing, and I'm very ambivalent on the issue. In my public life I challenge the politicians: as a counsellor in a very deprived area, as a social worker where I am dealing with individuals, and as a black activist. The more I think about what I'm doing in all three of those avenues the more convinced I am that I have no power whatsoever and the more confused I am at where power actually lies. Although I can say as a member of the Labour Party and a socialist that we must unite together, I know that there is no such thing as a collective movement because different people have different priorities.

I don't know where real power lies, I don't know how close I will ever get to it, all I know is that I am constantly chasing positions of powerlessness. Although at certain times I can walk

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into a room as Councillor Legal and demand attention at another time another place, I am a black woman walking the streets and I am powerless. I don't believe that I have any power.

Frances But the point is presumably that you would accept that you are a member of a Labour group and that that group has specific powers in relation to your council.

Do you think you'd have power if you were the leader of your group?

Gaynor No, because you also come up against the power of the officers.

Frances It is the collectivity that has the power.

Gaynor But is there such a thing as collectivity? I mean what happens at Labour group is that you bring up an issue and usually they work out the most tactical way of coming to a particular point. And it is often the easiest way, the way that will cause the least amount of ripples. So if they have to take all those things into consideration, who is exercising the power?

Inez I hold what is allegedly a powerful position in the Irish trade union movement – I measure the reality of that power in how much change I can effect in the condition of the people I represent. That is what is profoundly different for women in terms of taking power. The only power that I have had is in the amount of confidence and challenge that I have helped exercise in successfully resisting things. To me the power of ILEA didn't lie in the institution itself, the power of ILEA lay in the campaign to resist challenge to power. Thatcher exercised the control, you challenged it by the production from the people of the profoundly felt need for education for their children.

Frances I still disagree with you all. But my objection to this argument about how nebulous power is, is that it lets the power-holders off the hook. The Labour cabinet of 74-79 wasn't a bunch of powerless lads wondering where power resides. Was it hell! They willed what they did. And it was wrong. They had power and knowingly chose not to take on the British establishment over the IMF and industrial policy. That choice was an exercise of power – not an act of powerlessness. To take on the British establishment requires confidence and courage – as well as power.

Inez And responsibility and accountability.

Clare There are some meeting points about what Inez and I are saying. For example, I think that Neil Kinnock thinks that he is more powerful than he is. He thinks that because he is a determined and strong little bloke, he'll do it all. He is unaware of all the forces that are lined up against him, and where his potential power flows from. If he was aware of the strength that we need to resist the American state, the multinational companies and the mass media, and that our strength resides in having the people who vote for us clearly informed of all the problems that we face, then he would be more powerful.

Clare: 'I conclude that the only real power is the people who understand and are agitating with us.'

That's a positive recognition of the limited nature of power one has as an individual. Otherwise, people like you and I might say that the only way to change this bunch of useless politicians who keep producing failed Labour governments is to get ourselves elected. We have bitter battles about who's going to be the leader of anything because the whole issue is about whether they are sufficiently determined. That is both wrong and depressing. If there was a wider understanding amongst people involved in the labour movement that the empowering and the spreading of ideas and the strengthening of the base makes us powerful, those of us who are in representative positions would be more powerful.

Tricia But it can be just as mystifying to say that power is with the people as to say that it rests in the institutions. Because when I look at the people I represent I can see that I am more powerful than they are. That doesn't mean I have got absolute power, rather that they are so disorganised – in many cases because they are women and are excluded from the structures which have power within the trade union movement. In a sense, therefore, it lets us all off the hook just to say power is with people.

Frances: 'I want to be part of some process which actually challenges power.'

Inez Yes. You hold a position of power greater than the women in your union. I hold a position of power more than the women I represent. But the reason I hold the position is that I am representing them. I am holding their power. Right? But I am trying to get at a real process of change to enable them to be part of the responsibility of taking and exercising power. I don't think power is nebulous but the definition has not been sorted out by those who are willing to take it. That is what really amazes me. It took me a long time to get the confidence to recognise that we had developed methods of empowering our members and enable them to speak for themselves. That to me is the challenge and that also is the only real way of securing change.

Tricia I agree with you, but one of the things I would challenge is about only having power in relation to who you represent. It does seem to me that as women we have got to break away from being apologetic about even the limited amount of individual power we have got.

Clare It's power to effect change.

Tricia But we haven't addressed the question that, compared with many women we have a lot of power as individuals. We have to be able to say that without being complacent or manipulative, and without being distanced from the relationship which we have been talking about.

One of the characteristics of the conversations women build around politics is the readiness to explore their degree of powerlessness. Gaynor described the situations in which she might for a moment have power and all the other contexts in which she doesn't. That's extremely important to be able to do.

Inez I am extremely ruthless when I have to take on the people who try to destroy my members. I know how to do it. I know how to deal with the tricks in the labour movement when it comes to issues of women and what goes off the agenda and what goes on the agenda. That capacity is recognised and results in a fair amount of respect. I have used that fear and respect not to assume that I have power but to create the space to try and redefine the methods and make it possible for other women to take power. Now in doing that you have to go one step further and have the capacity to be uncertain, and to be honest and measure how much change you have effected. And that is a very brutal step.

Gaynor In these discussions it's extremely useful to sit back and be able to express powerlessness because you have to be able to look at where you are going.

Tricia I don't think there's anything wrong in admitting to a feeling of powerlessness. I just think we've got to be able to recognise our sense of power where it does exist. In the women's movement in the 70s we had exhaustive debates about the nature of power and there was a lot of ambiguity about women having positions of power and, looking back on it now much of it seems to have been unproductive. We have to recognise that this tension exists.

Inez To many women the experience of power within the movement is so deeply reprehensible that they don't want anything to do with it.

Frances But I think that the discussions within the women's movement that were the most important revolved around the question of male power.

Clare My perception of what I can and can't do within my job is important, because I'm very ambitious for the power that enables me to make the social changes that I'm after. This is why it isn't enough for us to take over from the men who occupied authority before. We have to change the practices if we are really serious about change. ●

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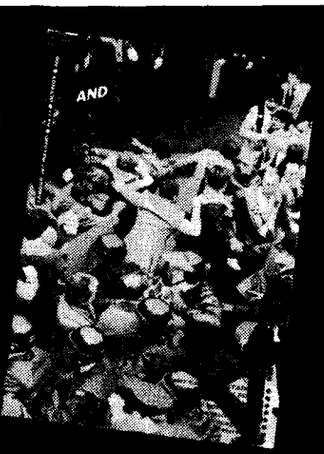

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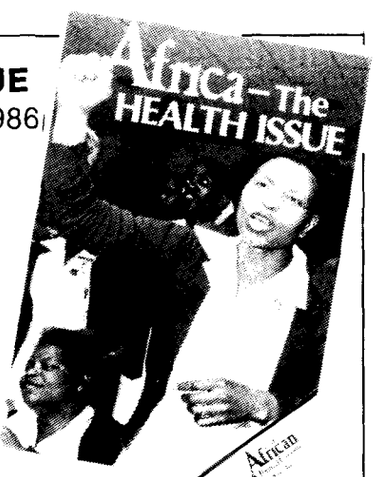

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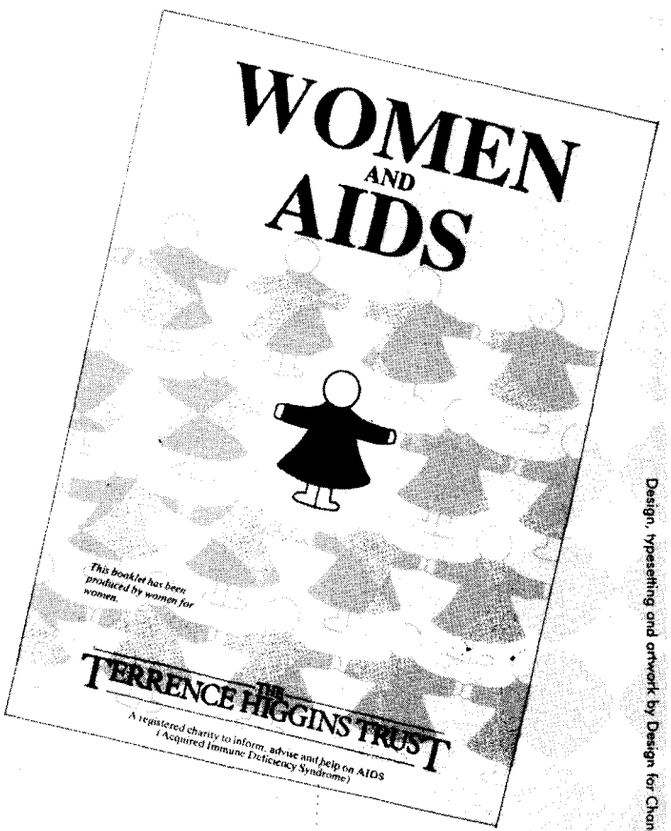
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Return of The Fighter

Israel has had a change of prime minister. Likud's Shamir has replaced the old fox, Peres. **Steve Vines** argues that, as a result, the prospects for a Middle East settlement are even dimmer

The old terrorist is back. Comfortably installed in the rather austere prime minister's office in Jerusalem sits the 71 year old Yitzhak Shamir.

His predecessor, Labour leader Shimon Peres, has assiduously kept his part of the bargain and handed over the job to Shamir. Peres knows all about bargains. He served his political apprenticeship as bag carrier to David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister. Ben-Gurion brought to Israeli politics all the ruthlessness and complex manoeuvring which he learned in the tough school of the Eastern European tradition.

It was Ben-Gurion who vividly saw the threat posed by the right-wing zionists in the period before the foundation of the Israeli state and it was Ben-Gurion who forced a showdown by threatening to blow up a ship carrying arms for the Irgun, the right-wing terrorist organisation run by Menachem Begin, Shamir's predecessor as leader of the Likud bloc. The Irgun backed down and handed over their arms to the Haganah, which was dominated by the labour zionists. In so doing they conceded political supremacy to the labour zionists.

The shotgun marriage of the Likud, the Labour Party and practically every other political party in Israel after the election two years ago was, given the history of bitter differences, hardly a love affair. It was forced on the politicians by an Israeli public tired of political wrangling.

Somehow, probably because the prospect of divorce was worse, the uncomfortable marriage has worked. Much in the same way that Italy's seemingly endless succession of governments since the war have managed to govern despite a dubious political mandate, Israel's coalition government has brought a kind of stability. The question puzzling most Israelis and indeed others concerned about the Middle East is what difference the change from a Labour to a Likud prime minister will make.

Many Arab commentators see little if any difference between so-called right wing and left wing Israeli governments. As far as they are concerned Israeli parties of the Left and Right are both zionist and therefore the same. They are wrong and would find out why by carefully studying Yitzhak Shamir's political career.

Like most of Israel's political leaders Shamir comes from Eastern Europe. In the heady days after the Russian revolution when Jews were drawn in disproportionately large numbers into revolutionary politics, a smaller number embraced zionism. In those days revolutionary politics were the norm and the zionists could only compete for adherents by presenting a radical face. distrusting the predominant socialistically-inclined zionist movement the followers of Ze'ev Jabotinsky created the revisionist zionist movement. Shamir joined the revisionists and emigrated to Palestine where he was quickly drawn into the struggle against the British mandatory authorities and the socialist zionists who held sway over the Jewish Agency, Israel's government-in-waiting. Unlike Begin who became a leader of the mainstream Irgun, the fighting wing of the revisionist movement, Shamir joined the splinter Israel Freedom Fighters, better known as the Stern Gang.

Whereas the Irgun were prepared to declare a truce with the British, the Stern Gang believed that the anti-imperialist struggle should continue during the second world war. The Stern Gang came to worldwide prominence with the 1944 murder of Lord Moyne, the British minister resident in Cairo. Its political beliefs have been obscured by subsequent history but they were – in today's terms – quite surprising.

The Sternists were not anti-Arab, indeed they saw the Arabs as potential allies in the fight against the British. They were also pro-Soviet and eventually declared themselves to be 'revolutionary socialists'. Their politics combined a strange mixture of passionate Jewish nationalism with a concept of 'national communism'.

Like the Irgun, this volatile organisation was disbanded after the foundation of the state of Israel; most of its members retiring from active politics. Some became active socialists; others veered into the extremist greater Israel movement. Shamir, who was twice captured by the British and had to escape further detention by fleeing to Eritrea, seemed to have dropped out of politics.

Like many of his former colleagues however, he gravitated towards Israel's secret service which he left in 1965 having risen to the position of head of Mossad's European section. His time with the secret service coincided with a period in which the service looked as though it was getting out of the government's control and was pursuing its own political objectives, notably a crude attempt to increase American unease about Abdul Nasser's Egypt by clandestinely staging the bombing of American premises in Cairo.

Shamir always seemed most at home in clandestine activity and the kind of politics which by-passed the democratic process. However in 1973 he entered parliament as a member of Begin's Herut Party. Strangely for a man who spent most of his life avoiding compromise, he rose to the top of the party as the compromise candidate. He lacks the demagogy of Begin and the common touch of politicians like his greatest rival, David Levy, but he has the confidence of the old timers who run the party and know him as a sound member of the core 'fighting family'.

When Begin became prime minister and Egypt's President Sadat visited Jerusalem some extremely fatuous comparisons were made between de Gaulle and Begin. Commentators recalled how it took the hardline French president to do a deal with the nationalists in Algeria and pacify the French settlers. They thought that, like de Gaulle, Begin was the man to sell a deal to the intransigent Israeli public who evidently showed little appetite for compromises with Arab governments.

Begin of course had no such inclination. He was not following the intransigent attitudes of the Israeli public, he was helping to form them. Shamir is in the same mould but more so. He lacks Begin's urbane charm and intellectual depth and so appears more blunt and more hardline. His relatively short acquaintance with party politics has left him desperately short of presentational

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skills. Lacking the ability even to appear flexible (something Begin miraculously managed to achieve) Shamir falls back on the traditional recourse of those lacking confidence, and is stubborn.

The contrast with Shimon Peres could not be greater. Peres is a man interested in power not in ideas. He has carefully worked the system until he clawed his way up to the top. His one act of political non-conformity, briefly leaving the Labour Party in the shadow of Ben-Gurion, was more to do with his personal loyalty to his master and belief in his return to power, than any ideological split.

So called 'moderate' Arab politicians like King Hussein and President Mubarak of Egypt recognised that they could do business with Peres. The superpowers too recognised this obvious facility. There is no prospect of doing business with Shamir, an ideologically driven politician who has had an intense acquaintance with both left and right-wing politics and arrived at his present position on the strength of long-held convictions.

Shamir is, above all, a great disappointment for the superpowers. Despite his position as leader of a right-wing party, Yitzhak Shamir is distrusted in Washington. The favoured American candidate for the premiership is Peres, a view shared in Moscow which took the first tentative steps to restoring diplomatic relations under Peres following the rupture in 1967 during the Six Day War.

The Americans are also rightly unconcerned about the 'socialist' tag which attaches itself to Peres's Labour Party, because of all the major parties in the Socialist International the Israeli Labour Party is probably the least representative of its working class. Ever since 1977 when Begin won a devastating election victory it has been clear that the right-wing Likud bloc are the authentic voice of Israel's Jewish workers, most of whom originate from Arab countries.

In the peculiar economic and ethnic structure which is today's Israel, the Labour Party represents the traditional vested interests and ruling elite. An uncharacteristically high proportion of the country's industry is out of the private sector; but it is not quite in the public sector either because it is run by powerful subsidiaries of the trade union movement which in turn is run by the Labour Party.

The majority of the Israeli Jewish population were born in, or originated from Arab countries. They arrived after the European Jews had settled and gathered the political institutions under their control. Although European predominance in political parties spreads across the spectrum from left to right, it was personified in the Labour Party which must have seemed as if it were destined to rule for ever.

Thus the working class opposition to the Labour Party gravitated to the right and stayed there but not just for negative reasons. More importantly the Right offered a far more acceptable policy on the biggest issue: relations with the Palestinians and the Arab world in general. To Israel's naturally hawkish proletariat, many of whom were forced out of Arab countries into Israel, the Labour Party appeared to be dangerous.

There is therefore absolutely no political mileage to be gained by Shamir adopting a more conciliatory attitude towards peace negotiations with Israel's neighbours and there is hardly a great deal of popular acclaim to be gained by Peres in pushing him along that road. Peres could only exercise his carefully honed negotiating skills as prime minister.

The fact that many in the Arab world alongside the political leadership in Washington and Moscow want to see Peres back in a position of control is of little help to the ever flexible Labour leader. The Israeli public has been in a go-it-alone mood for some time. External endorsements are viewed with the deepest suspicion. On the other hand public opinion seems to have developed a strong appetite for coalitions so Peres and his supporters can expect a secure existence in the government unless either side has a brainstorm and insists on any radical departures from existing policy. Failing this Israelis are looking forward to a further period of the two 'S'es, stability and stalemate. ●

'Shamir always seemed most at home in clandestine activity and the kind of politics which by-passed the democratic process'

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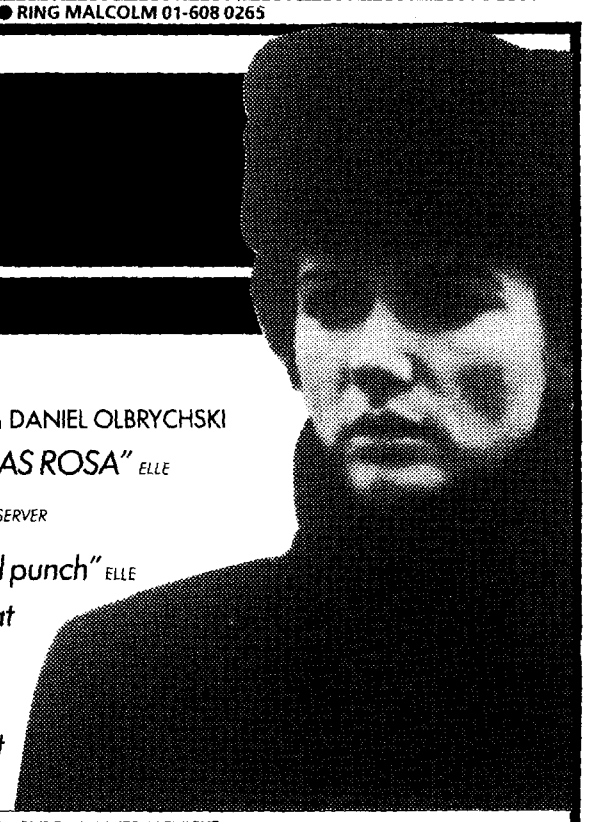

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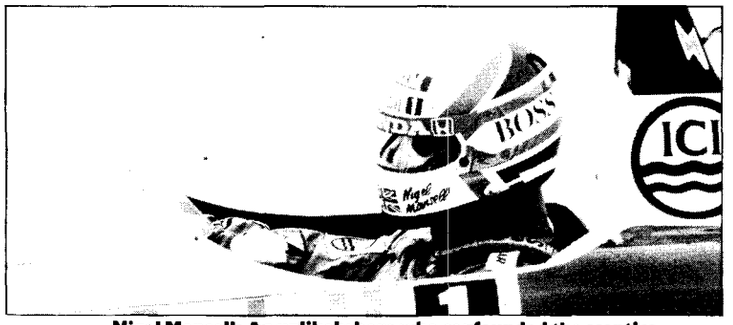

Nigel Mansell: An unlikely hero who confounded the sceptics

Grand prix driver Nigel Mansell is an unlikely motor racing champion. He neither looks nor sounds the part. His Brummie monotone belongs more to the Lucas Aerospace works where he was once an engineer, while his habit of bringing his wife and children to races doesn't fit the image of fast-living, jet-setting grand prix ace. Besides, Mansell, 32, shouldn't logically *be* champion. As number two driver in the Williams' grand prix team to Brazilian star Nelson Piquet, Mansell should be playing a supporting role – not regularly beating his higher-paid team mate.

Yet, that is precisely what Mansell has done this year – taking him within a gear-change of the world championship. With five victories under his belt at the time of going to press, Mansell had only to win one more race to be assured the title; a prospect which confounded the sceptics who have doubted his ability.

For Mansell has never been credited with the natural talent of former British world champions Jim Clark (his own hero) and Jackie Stewart – or even his own rivals for the title – Alain Prost, Ayrton Senna and Nelson Piquet. Rather, Mansell is seen as a gutsy trier – who in the past invariably tried too hard and ended up in the crash barriers. He has none of the financial advantages of some of his colleagues, financing his early racing by washing windows, while his wife Rosanne demonstrated gas cookers. He eventually sold everything to get into Formula 3 – the proving ground for aspiring grand prix stars. Once there, he didn't dominate the scene, like many of his current rivals such as Piquet – but instead performed well in uncompetitive cars.

By then he had broken his neck and badly injured his back in racing accidents. But his biggest break came when talent spotter Colin Chapman, the boss of Lotus cars offered him a formula one drive. Despite a good rapport with Chapman, errors outnumbered results, and after Chapman's death in 1982, Mansell's career nose-dived. 'When I was with Colin,' he says, 'things were very good but when he died, things changed. Colin handled many sections of the business himself – he could do it, because he had the power and charisma and the final say. But when he died, Lotus floundered for a couple of years.'

By good fortune, Mansell was offered the number two seat at Williams – a team which had itself been struggling with the advent of turbo-charged engines. Still, Mansell was noted more for his gaffes than his gifts – particularly by spinning off in front of the tv cameras while leading the Monaco Grand Prix. At the end of the 1984 season, the McLaren team had presented a comic video of Mansell's accidents and excuses at a victory celebration; and when it was announced that Mansell was to be his team mate, Williams' driver Keke Rosberg threatened to quit. 'The human being I can get along with,' said the former world champion. 'The professional person I'm not so sure about'.

However, as Williams' design director Patrick Head points out, Williams was in the throes of adapting to turbo-engine technology, and badly needed a driver with turbo experience – which Mansell had with Lotus. 'I thought he was a driver very committed to working hard.'

Head's faith was rewarded – by the end of 1985 Mansell was winning at last, and his form continued spectacularly into 1986. Everyone agrees that Mansell is a changed man this year – success has brought a new confidence and image consciousness. He suffers fools politely, if not gladly, interviews are restricted to five minutes, he deftly switches caps mid-interview to please the sponsors, and he slips into a bizarre third person PR speak when talking about himself.

Who can blame him for playing the part? Ferrari has already offered him an alleged £1.5M to drive its cars next year, and McLaren, the team that two years ago made him the office party joke, has also been on the phone. Mansell has now re-signed with Williams, for a rumoured £2m for two years.

Many paddock pundits argue that Mansell has simply been lucky to be in the right team – and car – at the right time. Mansell has always paid tribute to teamwork in an era of eight second stops for tyre changes, but insists: 'The driver's still got to do the job, he's still got to go out and win the race. The tyres stops are critical, because you can screw up during tyre stops, but it just involves the team a little bit more than they were before.' In answer to his critics, Mansell has made few mistakes this year – even under extreme pressure. In fact, it is star driver Piquet who has goofed more regularly than his number two. Success has, undoubtedly, changed him. It has made him hungry for more ●

Nick Newman

The Spice of Life

A new series of six half-hour comedy programmes *Victoria Wood as seen on TV* starts this month. Michelene Wandour spoke to its originator, writer and performer, Victoria Wood, in rehearsals.

Can we start at the beginning. Born . . .

Born Prestwich near Manchester, 1953. Grammar school, university. Television. Before I graduated from university I was a barmaid in a pub in Birmingham, and met someone who worked at the BBC who heard me playing the piano, and asked me to audition at Pebble Mill, which I did. I got a few odd little jobs singing songs on their regional programme on Friday nights. The first programme was a folk programme and I sang on that. Then they asked me to write songs specially for some of their other programmes. So by the time I left I already had an Equity card. You can't get them now for just being on the BBC, but you could at that time.

You write and perform your own material. Have you done other people's stuff?

At university I was in lots of plays. But I've never wanted to really. It's just the way it's gone. I've always been writing something and then gone on to do it or getting it done. I'm not an actress, so I don't go round scouting for other people's things to do.

I would do something if I thought it was a great script. I'd do a part in a film or something if anybody asked me. I've just been offered a little part. I can't do it because I'm busy with this.

When did you get married?

1980. We met in a play at Leicester. In 1976. Geoff was an actor then, he was in the show at the Leicester Phoenix playing Buffalo Bill. I was very out of work and they needed somebody to play the piano for the show for two weeks. A bit after that he decided to stop being an actor. And became a magician instead.

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Have you done shows together?
We haven't done since 1982, when we went to Ostend with a show there. We thought it was time I should do a full-length show on my own and he should skip off and do television.
Do you watch each other's stuff?
The way it's worked out the last couple of years we haven't always been able to. I can always get to see him in pantomime, because it's 12 weeks at a time.
Are you going to have any children?
I don't know, things are so rushed at the moment, there's no way we could. I haven't been at home since July and I won't be home until November.
Where's home?
Near Lancaster. Geoff's been on tour at least twice this year, he's just got back from Kenya. And he'll be in pantomime over Christmas. It's all very disjointed, there's not much home life.
What are the questions you get asked most often in interviews?
Why aren't there more female comediennes?
Do you want me to ask that?
No, because I don't know the answer.
You get comedy formats, don't you, like *Three of a Kind*. There you have three or four blokes and one woman.
Yes. But they're written by men, so it's a natural progression. I write my show, and we've got three or four women and only one regular man. I bring men in to play businessmen, so I'm just the same. It's just natural that you tend to write for women.
Based on your own gender and your own interests?
Yes. And men do that too, there's no reason to criticise them.
What do you like doing best?
I think stand up comedy is what I prefer in theatre. And I love doing this whole show, because I like the feeling that I've written six episodes.
Do you take a central part in deciding how it is structured? Are you producing in a sense?
No, I'm not producing in that way. I think of six running orders and I'll give them to the producer, and he'll probably say: 'We can't put those two together, or in two separate sketches because they've got the same person in them, and they have to be paid twice'. Something like that. There are things that he knows about that I don't. As long as you say there's a film in each, a song in each, a short sketch then a big sketch, it's fairly easy to do. There's so much stuff and it's quite varied.
So, you've got a quite unusual degree of control over what you do and how you do it?
Yes.
Writing, performing, being part of the structure, casting. And directing and interpretation in a sense.
Yes. Intonations and things like that. Most people get it right first off. Geoff Posner is an absolutely great director. I don't interfere with him. I mean, we work together. So, if somebody misses the gist, I'd say, try it the other way. I'm always around.
Are you there for the editing?
No. I think that's a very specialised job, and I wouldn't have anything to contribute.
Have you worked very much with the other so-called alternative comics?
No. I only work with my own chaps.
Have you wanted to?
No. I think they're all very much a group. I don't want to be part of anybody's group really. What I found about them is they all seem to have the same line on things. Whoever's name goes up at the end for the writing, I find it could have been any of them. They've got a joint sense of humour. There's eight people, with one enormous sense of humour between them. I think that's a pity. Everybody's individual.
But do you think there is a shared climate between the sorts of things you do and the things they've done? Is there something anarchic about both?
I don't know, really, They're younger than I am, most of them. About four years, I suppose. I don't feel any more connection with them than I do with Monty Python, even though I like them both. I just feel I'm following a theatrical tradition.
Which is linked to what?

Victoria Wood: 'I don't want to be part of anybody's group'

To variety. They're the roots that I recognise. It's not from my own childhood, I didn't have a particularly theatrical background. And I'm not sentimental – about the good old days or anything. But you do feel, when you walk on a stage, whether it's a new theatre or an old variety theatre, that you are following the footsteps of anybody who has ever walked out there and tried to entertain people. What's nice is that it's an old tradition, but it happens that minute that you do it.
I haven't asked you anything about feminism.
No. that's very good.
What do you think of feminism?
I don't know what people mean by it. I'm all for it, as long as it makes people more cheerful. Not miserable, and worrying about hairs on their legs. I don't like anything that tells people what to do.
What about marxism then?
I don't know anything about marxism.
What does it conjure up?
I think it conjures up miserable people shouting at me.
So politics is a lot of miserable people, standing shouting at you, telling you what you can't do.
Yes!
I wonder where that comes from. Who shouted at you in your childhood?
No one. It must be from things I've read. I can't bear people discussing things, really. I can't stand it.
Why?
I think it serves no purpose. and it never makes me very happy. Thrashing things out.
Do you prefer just to get on and do something?
Yes. I like to think inside my own brain, I don't want to know what other people's brains are doing. I like to think about something and do it. And if others don't like it, sod it.
What if there's something you're curious about?
Issues, you mean?
No, anything.
I don't have a lot of natural curiosity, just about people.
About what they do and why they do it?

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What they do. I don't think I ever know why people do things. I just like to know what they do. I love watching other people. It's a story unfolding. I might write down something people said, and never use it. It just sets you off. I think people are very underrated by writers. Ordinary people. People on the whole express themselves very well, and they don't have the limited vocabulary that most writers give them credit for.

Do you think that political people don't give ordinary people enough credit?

I don't know. I can't understand anybody wanting to go into politics. Local politics, I can understand a bit, because it's to do with normal things. But I can't understand anybody wanting to go into parliament. I think they must be barmy.

Do you think it's anything to do with them wanting power?

Yes. And a certain kind of life as well. I think it's awful that people are making decisions who don't have any home life, never watch television, never go for a walk, and live on black coffee. I think it's all slightly deranged.

Are there any new characters in your new show?

Yes. Kelly Marie Tunstall. She wears fish-net tights, and shirts shorter than her jackets. She stands at the bus stop talking. That's my new person. That's me, and I have a side kick called Mary.

Is this the first time we've seen your legs?

Yes. Shocked the cameramen. They were taken aback by them.

What shoes are you wearing?

High heels, very, as high as I can manage. It's all right because I just stand there, I don't have to walk about. Made me walk like Barbara Windsor, which made me laugh.

And after the tv shows?

I'd like to do a film. I've got a few things at the back of my mind. But I'm not really thinking about anything except this series. Then I'll have a bit of a rest. I can't do any big jobs, I'm too tired. I've been working non-stop since January, I need a holiday, a break. ●

Pat Phoenix: Flamboyant effect

Going Out In Style

From the announcement of lung cancer, until her funeral a month later, actress Pat Phoenix was seldom out of the tabloid headlines. But the intensity of the late summer press coverage and the enormous public interest it generated cannot be explained only in terms of cynical exploitation and ghoulish voyeurism – though those elements *were* present, particularly in the *Sun* and *The News of the World* with their tacky 'open letters' and 'deathbed' pictures.

For a start, Pat Phoenix herself, despite her increasing debilitation, was no passive victim of media manipulation. In a sense, she 'produced' her own dying in as stylish and courageous a fashion as anyone in her situation could muster. From the press conference dressed up to the nines – 'tra-ra loves' – to the last rites, followed immediately by the wedding – 'hurry up, I'm dying' – to the razzmatazz funeral with New Orleans jazz band and black gospel choir, and then being cremated to Christina Rossetti and Lionel Richie with the showbiz wake after: she planned it all for maximum flamboyant effect.

The press obituaries called her 'The People's Star'. The fans at the funeral described her as 'belonging to us' or 'like one of us'. In terms of the resources that provided private hospitalisation, daily hairdresser and negligees, she clearly wasn't. But as someone widely known to have had a troubled life both as 'herself' and as the character, Elsie Tanner in *Coronation Street*, she was. And the identification was all the stronger because she came through, in both roles, as 'a fighter': resilient, optimistic, down-to-earth.

When she left *Coronation Street* in 1983 she said it was because she wasn't prepared to 'grow old gracefully', quietly gin-drinking at the Rover's. I think she perceived, correctly, that while her own character, and subsequently those of Bet, Rita, Audrey, had done much to promote the possibility of middle-aged women being both strong and sexy, you couldn't yet portray a 'disgraceful' *old* woman without making her ridiculous. You could still be powerful when old, but, minus the eroticism, the choice was meddlesome battle-axe (Ena Sharples) or genteel regality (Annie Walker). So Elsie retired with lover to Spain, leaving Pat Phoenix in a subsequent career of advertising, chat-shows and new drama roles, to resolve, on a theatrical fantasy level at least, and right up to her death, the real-life tension of being both OAP and sex-symbol.

Hence the manner of her dying appeared a 'fitting' final performance for her public. But given the lack of open discussion about death, there's a sense in which the stars always do our dying for us through media coverage. The widely-quoted announce ment that Pat Phoenix died with dignity, pain-free and not alone spoke directly to the strongest private fears about our own deaths and offered consolations similar to those other recent deaths from cancer of Diana Dors and Noele Gordon. Having 'a good death', 'a magnificent send-off', 'going out in style' may reflect the sort of idealism that has nothing to say to the materialist belief that there's no heaven and all flesh is grass, but it still holds more powerful appeal ●

Rosalind Brunt

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The Party Is Over

In the autumn of 1981, Pluto Press, the most successful of the new breed of radical book publishers which emerged in Britain in the 1970s, held a party in a North London nightclub to celebrate '10 Years in the Red'. The mood of the party was upbeat and stylish; its message was that the new decade would be the time when the radical book trade came 'out of the ghetto' and into the mainstream of the British book business. Pluto, with their new list of diaries and cookbooks, instant books by journalists on topical events, and cooperation with mass-market publishers like Pan with *The State of the World Atlas*, intended to lead the way.

Five years on, it all looks very different. Instead of expansion, several of the then most promising radical publishers and bookshops have collapsed; others have contracted. Pluto themselves are now in the hands of the receivers. The party is well and truly over.

For each individual radical publisher or bookseller that has gone under, there is a straightforward explanation, usually connected, as in Pluto's case, with trying to expand with too little capital: the classic dilemma of small successful firms in a market economy. What is more difficult to explain is why one of the great achievements of the Left in the 1970s, the creation of the most extensive network of radical publishers and booksellers since the late 1930s, now seems like some misplaced dream.

It is too easy to blame all this on a downturn in the overall book trade, for there have been downturns before, particularly in the late 1970s when radical firms did well. Too simple, also, to attribute it to seven years of Thatcherism: there is often an increase in the demand for radical literature in times of recession or under Tory governments.

What many of us involved in the radical book business in the 1970 misunderstood was that that decade was a very unusual one for publishing and bookselling.

In bookselling, there was an absence of lively city-centre bookshops which could market and sell books on the new social issues of the time: feminism, ecology and nuclear power, political action outside the traditional parties. In publishing, there were few commercial firms adventurous enough to recognise a demand for something in between the conventional hardback and the mass-market paperback, what became known as the 'trade' paperback. For a few years in the mid-1970s, the new radical publishers and booksellers had an audience which was not being reached by anyone else, the college-educated, radically-inclined middle class.

When the new chain bookstores started emerging in the early 1980s, they quickly became known as more efficient places to buy radical books than most radical bookshops. When the amalgamations which took place in British publishing in the 1970s produced new 'trade' paperback imprints, the result was a stream of radical texts often cheaper than their equivalents from radical publishers.

The parts of the 1970s' radical book trade that have survived are those which chose to specialise in particular topics and make one part of the radical book market their own, publishers like the feminist presses, Comedia, Gay Men's Press (GMP), Zed (on the Third World); booksellers like Central Books and Bookmarks with clear party allegiances or Compendium with 'contemporary' books.

Those parts of the radical trade who, like Pluto, tried to use their 1970s success to continue to operate across the range could not compete. Because it had been relatively easy to sell radical books in the 1970s with little commercial competition, they had not developed the hard business skills to survive. ●

David Berry

Sweet Inspirations

There's a small suburban house diagonally opposite the local McDonald's in East Orange, New Jersey. From the outside it's an unremarkable white bungalow, just another family home in commuting distance from New York, but over the last ten years it has housed a triumvirate of female soul singers whose reputations are as important to black female creativity as the novels of Zora Neale Hurston or Alice Walker.

The house belongs to Cissy Houston, one time vocalist of the 60s' soul choir The Sweet Inspirations, and the mother of black America's most famous new star, Whitney Houston. The expensive car in the driveway, parked beneath the basketball net, belongs to their cousin Dionne Warwick, a frequent visitor to the house and the motivating force behind some of the most public statements that popular feminism has made in the 80s.

Dionne Warwick and Cissy Houston have been at the forefront of several sister-sing projects that have included charity shows, benefit appearances, a musical campaign to support research into AIDS and strident support for Artists Against Apartheid. Meanwhile, with manipulative care, they have guided Whitney Houston's career to unprecedented heights.

Soul music is currently producing more affirmative images of women than any other area of cultural activity. Despite the pouting gloss and designer dross of so much modern soul music, black American music has produced Whitney Houston, Janet Jackson, a teenager who out-manoeuvred her father to produce *Control*, one of the most positive albums of the year; and from rap music – the terrain of the boasting male – came the Real Roxanne, an irrepressible fly girl from the housing projects:

In America sister-sing is big business. The most recent success united Dionne Warwick, Gladys Knight and Patti Labelle in a tour and tv special called *Sisters In The Name Of Love*, described by critics as a 'hymn to girl-ism' and seen by the participants as a public pronouncement of a camaraderie that stretches back to the 60s.

Sisters In The Name Of Love was also a celebration of three heroines. Dionne, the campaigning liberal whose career stretches from

Chaka Khan: Inspired tragedy

the pop hit *Walk On By* to the recent AIDS research song *That's What Friends Are For*; Gladys, who stole the show from any man that dared to share the same stage at Harlem's Apollo Theatre; and Patti, the epitome of the roots vocalist, who once fronted Labelle, probably the best feminist soul group ever.

Labelle, all decked out in space-age costumes and boa feathers, and fortified by Patti's voice and the sexually ambivalent style of Nona Hendryx, offered an image of the female singer that dispensed with the pretty sensuality of most pop. They were part of a strutting extravagance that runs counter to another persistent image of the black female vocalist, a lady singing the blues, and living a life of inspired

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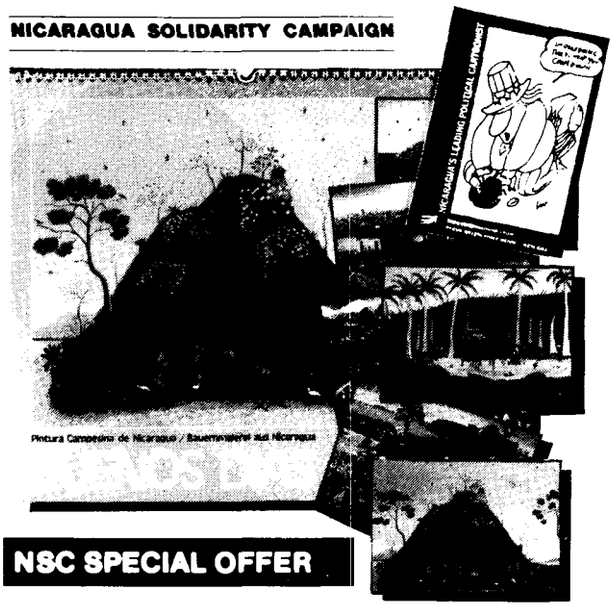

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tragedy. Labelle existed outside the historical neurosis that produced tragic stars like Billie Holiday, Esther Phillips, Nina Simone, Aretha Franklin and, most recently, the Chicago singer, Chaka Khan.

With Billie Holiday and Esther Phillips dead through drug addiction, and Aretha Franklin increasingly troubled by agoraphobia, the potential for public disintigration lies with Chaka Khan, a woman who is often dismissed in the press as 'difficult', but who stands out as the most articulate and politically engaging star of modern music. She is wilfully controversial, recently ignoring the wishes of her record company and appearing on the same political platform as the infamous black nationalist leader Louis Farrakhan. Chaka Khan sometimes seems to be reworking the myth of Billie Holiday, stringing out her nerves on a set of dependencies that unite around drugs and singing. She says herself: 'There's a thin line between genius and insanity. I hate to think I'm a tragic singer but I have to admit that I do my best shows when something tragic is happening in my life. I'm always motivated by tragedy. A few songs I've recorded like *Twisted* and *My Destiny* are psychoanalytical, a very private process that I have to make public. I have no pride in that respect, I'm honest about my problems.'

She describes her career as a journey to 'hell and back in a limousine'. 'The limousine' she says, 'is a synopsis of how I view the business I'm in. It's very hard work and the journey to hell and back in a limo is my way of describing the facade, the cover, the glamour that disguises the reality. The car attracts all kinds of hangers on, people whose motives are selfish. I feel that music is always compromised by economics and the limousine is the reward you get for compromising. Every time I think the music business is compromising me I plan my revenge. You can do a lot of damage to a limousine.' ●

Stuart Cosgrove

The Mop vs The Pen

Pat Barker describes herself as coming from a long line of cleaners. In which case all third generation cleaners should swap their mop for a pen and follow in her footsteps.

Born in Teesside in 1943 she has to date produced three novels; *Union Street* (1982), *Blow Your House Down* (1984) and *The Century's Daughter* published last month by Virago. When I visited her in her semi-detached, generously-gardened private house on the outskirts of Durham it struck me how very different her present surroundings must be to the streets of her childhood which provide the backdrop to her books.

It took ten years for Pat Barker to get her first novel past the publishers and onto the bookshelves. Prompted by repeated rejections to assert her Northern working class background, she describes writing *Union Street* as 'like a lid blowing off a pressure cooker'. Which was how it felt to read it. As though somewhere inside my head something was exploding at the injustice of it all.

Using her unique realist style she weaves the threads of shared experiences, which unite working class women in their powerlessness, through the pages of *Union Street*. At the same time she is critical of a feminism which sentimentalises such female support networks, often quickly withdrawn if an attempt to break out and escape is made. 'You have to be a member of the club, and the membership card is a man' she says, describing how women who try to assert their independence risk ending up isolated and alone.

The need to belong to, and form communities, Pat Barker sees as common to us all, but best achieved by women, particularly mothers, whose survival often depends on their mutual support. It was motherhood which shocked her into becoming a feminist through the 'total exclusion from the mainstream of life'. That was when she started to write, perhaps explaining the centrality of motherhood to her writing.

The other pivotal theme in Barker's literary world is sex, which she rarely portrays as an act of pleasure for women, but as a source of oppression and degradation. Her explanation that fear of unwanted pregnancies combined with financial hardship must 'blight one's sexuality and lead to prudishness' can only be partial. It is perhaps women's needs to redefine the sex act itself which continues to make us suspicious and wary, even in these days of birth control. Whatever the explanation her rejection of romanticism is refreshingly honest.

The fact that she is no longer part of a working class community is a problem for Pat Barker not only as a working class woman but also as a writer. She avoids the voyeuristic dangers of writing about a part of the world she no longer belongs to, for people who never did, by writing not for an audience but for the characters themselves and for the women she's known.

The dialogue she creates as a result is the most exciting thing about her work, relying as it does on the rich language of working class communities where the oral mode is primary. And when the oral mode is skillfully used the result is not only powerful and arresting but also open and accessible, transforming the middle class novel into something which comes from, and is accessible to, the people about whom it is written.

The Century's Daughter marks a clear development from Pat Barker's previous two novels. This time she manages to avoid enshrouding the reader in a blanket of despair. Through two world wars and the depression, up to the present day, she traces the life of Lisa Jarret, brilliantly exposing the conflicts of class and gender and highlighting how they combine to define Lisa's existence. By introducing Stephen, a young middle class homosexual who befriends Lisa as an old lady, she pays tribute to the diverse range of human experience and gives a moving example of our potential to love.

Pat Barker: Swapped her mop

In her next book Pat Barker intends to extend the use of a male character to explore the male view of masculinity. It is a debate which she believes is sorely needed, and one that she insists will have to be initiated by women. 'Men have always written about women and told us what we feel, what it's like to have a baby's head in your vagina, and all those other things over which they have no authority. I think it's time we took the dissecting knife to men, if we get it wrong perhaps they'll take the knife into their own hands and start to dissect themselves.' A challenging project and one in which I hope she succeeds! ●

Janie Glen

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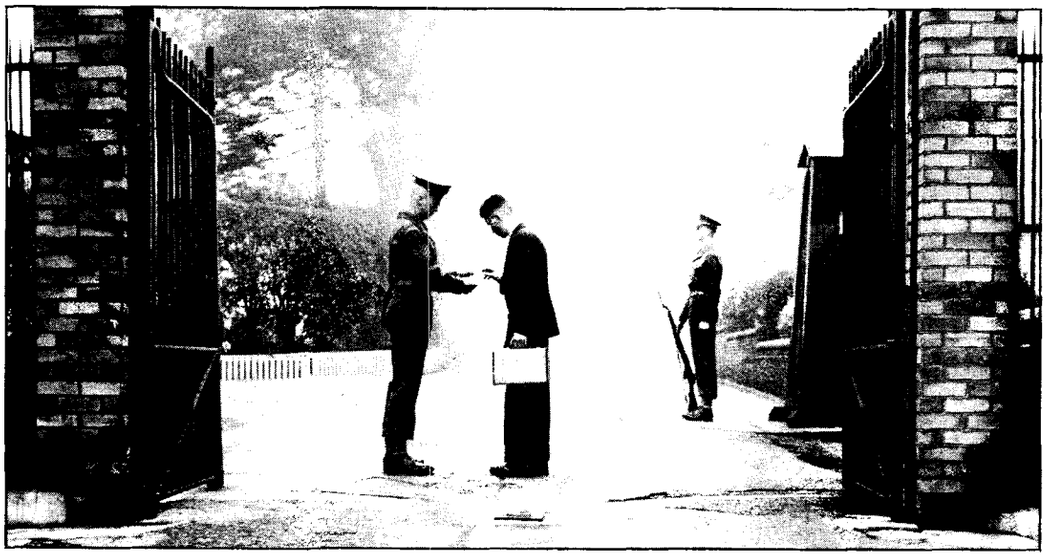

Advice for the raw recruit: 'If it moves salute it; if you can't polish it, paint it white'

Get Fell In

The fact that some two and a quarter million men were drafted into national service between 1945 and 1963 was due to the persistence of Major Clem, who happened to be prime minister and whose idea of socialism derived from boys' clubs and batmen; gristle-brained Old Monty, Chief of the Imperial General Staff; and the bellicose bulldog at the Foreign Office, Ernest Bevin. It lasted until the time Britain secured its nuclear V-bomber force, garrisoning strategic imperial strongholds in a period of decolonisation and policing a divided, broken Europe.

The Imperial War Museum has devised an exhibition to commemorate this now largely forgotten history, optimistically called *The Best Years of Their Lives*. It accords with current 50s nostalgia. The first exhibit shows a distinctly odd, unseasy dummy boasting teddy boy haircut and orange drape; the next has this imaginary teenager spick and span, head shaved – the action-man dummy clearly more habituated to demonstrating proper military bearing.

It is a most peculiar exhibition, not at all clear who it is aimed at. There is the usual memorabilia: old snapshots and call-up papers; letters home and knick-knacks from faraway imperial lands; photos of Bobby Charlton, John Biffen and Bruce Kent as lads; the manuscript of David Lodge's first novel, drafted between clerking duties.

The exhibition does little to convey the collective experiences of this extraordinary postwar history. It tells us nothing of the politics, nothing of the unremitting tedium, the tight little worlds of intensely brutalised masculinity. For that we need to go to Arnold Wesker or John McGrath. Or to Jeff Nuttall who, on being demobbed, was the recipient of ten quids' worth of paints from his sergeant's mess: 'There they were, the drunken brutalised old fascists, and there I was, more deeply moved than ever before in my life'. Perhaps, today, this exhibition speaks more to our current young Tebbits than anyone else. ●

Bill Schwartz

The Best Years of Their Lives runs at the Imperial War Museum, London, until May 1987.

Style Age Mags

In the art-school-rocking late 70s the detailed, analytical *NME* was *the read*. In the 80s its successor is the glossy, gossip-on-acid of *Smash Hits*.

The magazines which have reached the status of 'bibles' this decade – *The Face* and *i-D* – have done so because of their *style*. Both publications have presented a style for every facet of 80s living – decor, footwear, record sleeves, sculpture, skirts, videos – all of which are to be kept up with.

Into this market comes the pilot issue of *FSM (Fairly Serious Monthly)* – leftish, multi-interest and written for 16 to 25 year olds by 16 to 25 years olds – timetabled for a spring 1987 nationwide launch.

With its second issue out now is *Well Red*, the pop and politics magazine from Red Wedge. *Scope* is aimed at the young black adult. All three magazines can make an important contribution to the coverage available to young people. But this is hampered by their choice of predictable articles: drugs, Greenham Common, YTS, legal rights, and the Red Wedge concerts. An article on young SDP candidate Danny Finkelstein stands out in *FSM* because it is less 'expected'. It highlights the problems that that absent 'gamble' element can cause.

Red Wedge's *Well Red* is in the difficult position of having to present itself to 'the adult world' as a credible and informed political force, whilst attracting a generation excluded from and disinterested in political involvement. The writing in *Scope* appears sadly flat, *FSM* is more alluring but with awkward rough edges. *Well Red's* style is professional and readable, however the highly-politicised editorial team have covered issues at a level of complexity which will alienate their target readership before they start to read.

The 'communique' section of *FSM*, with its short pieces, is punchy and attractive. With columns and pictures set at angles across the page, its layout contributes to its success.

There is no room now for nostalgic stylistic references to the photocopied fanzines of the punk era. Magazines like *FSM*, *Scope* and *Well Red* will have to compete on the news-stands with *Vogue*, *Elle*, *The Face* and *Smash Hits*. It is desperately important they do so ●

Debbie Hyde

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Jesuit priest (Robert de Niro) confronts encroaching colonialists

Mission Impossible

The Mission is set in 18th century South America. Spain and Portugal have joined forces to reorganise the continent's borders, ignoring the indigenous tribes for whom the forests have long been home.

The Guaranti tribe are hostile to outside civilisation, but Jesuit missionaries led by Gabriel (Jeremy Irons) and Mendoza (Robert de Niro) make peace with them. Both want the tribe to survive in their natural surroundings and defeat the colonisers. Mendoza uses fighting power; Gabriel, the spiritual love of God.

There are parallels between 18th century South America and the continuing superpower colonisation of undeveloped nations today. In Brazil and Paraguay, Indians have lost their forest homes to mining, oil exploration, motorways and dams.

The Mission is a reminder that what the Portuguese and Spanish exploited by slavery and plantations was a prelude to the riches being stripped from the Amazon jungle today ●

Nigel Arthur

High Tech Rip-Off

With the launch of the new Amstrad microcomputer, the PC1512, the Left's liberation from manual typewriters and greasy card-index systems becomes as close as the nearest branch of Dixons's.

Prices for the new machine from Alan Sugar's competition-busting company start at £399.

The PC1512 has the crucial property of IBM-compatibility, which means that it will run virtually all of the software available for the industry-standard IBM machine. To complete the package just add a printer (£150-£500) and software, and prices for the latter look set to be forced down to the right side of £50 per application.

Such an outstanding bargain is the new Amstrad that for quite a while it will spoil the fun of those computer buffs who love to pontificate about 'best buys' in the micro market. But Sugar's own meteoric rise in the industry spells more serious trouble. A car-boot trader made big, he has demonstrated that Mac-the-Knife tactics pay off in British high-tech.

Where former rival Clive Sinclair – whose company he swallowed recently – emphasised innovation and research, Sugar has prospered by copying established designs. He is said to have given the PC1512 the private nickname AIRO (for 'Amstrad IBM Rip-Off') and his top-seller of last year, the PCW8256, was a cunning package of 70s technology with a razor-keen price.

Third-world manufacture keeps Amstrad costs (and Sugar's UK responsibilities) at rock-bottom. In contrast, rivals such as Sinclair, Acorn and Apricot are built in British. Now Sinclair is gone; Acorn has suffered a humiliating rescue by Italian giant Olivetti; and Apricot is on the rocks, with £15m losses and 180 redundancies in the last year.

The knowledge that he holds the UK's torch for the 'sunrise' micro industry has not unnerved Alan Sugar. In the week of the PC1512's launch he scorned any talk of serious commitment, in terms which were over the top even by Amstrad standards: 'if there was a market in mass-produced portable nuclear weapons, we'd market them too'. Perhaps the best answer to that would be an extra surge of anti-nuclear activity, organised with the help of the new machine ●

Tom Conlon

CURTAIN UP!

On The Home Front
by Eastern Angles Theatre Co., touring extensively in East Anglia. Musical play about the first world war based on interviews with land girls, evacuees, WAAFS. 'It was a time for music – from singing in the shelter to whistling in the dark'. Details: 0473 218202.

Misalliance
by Bernard Shaw. RSC at the Barbican. Household of underwear tycoon is invaded by aviator with three fathers, plus Polish

tight-rope walker, juggling oranges while reading a bible. Shavian wit, farce and ideas. Details: 01-638 8891.

Hidden Fires
by Alfred de Musset. Glasgow Citizens Theatre Oct 3 – Nov 2. Marriage comedy set in provincial France. Innovative company, greatly influenced by European theatre, consistently surprising and stimulating. Details 041 429 0022.

Henry IV pts I & II, Henry V
Shakespeare. New Theatre, Cardiff. Nov 17-22. New company headed by leading figure at RSC, Michael Pennington. Should be interesting. Details: 0222 394844.

China Week
Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh. Nov 3-8. Workshops with members of Peking Opera, plus films, exhibitions, handicrafts, music. Interesting start to Edinburgh's permanent cultural centre. Details: 031 225 3614.

And the name of the daughter was Rose
by Roxanne Schafer. Liverpool Playhouse Studio. Nov 12 onwards. Faded Hollywood starlet copes with her 'bathtub' liberalism when faced with race riots and bigots' backlash. Details: 051 227 5644.

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BOOKS

HAROLD WILSON

Row, Row, Row, the Boat!

Harold Wilson Memoirs 1916-1964
Harold Wilson
Weidenfeld and Nicolson
£14.95 hbk

Union Man
Jack Jones
Collins £15 hbk

Just as Neil Kinnock seems set to repeat Harold Wilson's achievement, and to lead Labour from fratricide to electoral victory, Wilson's own memoirs are published. The coincidence poses the unavoidable question: are the two made of the same stuff? Or should the comparison be limited to Wilson's fellow Yorkshireman Roy Hattersley? For at last month's party conference he at least announced that Labour will 'get Britain working again', a direct crib from Wilson's 1964 slogan.

Comparison is important as it is not just a matter of personalities. But a personal response is an unavoidable part of reading an autobiography, and reading Wilson's I wanted to puke. The pettiness and lack of any sense of history or consequence is not the problem so much as the fact that I cannot but admit to an association with it. I believed in Wilson, however briefly, and in a youthful way fought to make him prime minister. This coloured my feelings as I ploughed reluctantly through his tittle-tattle.

Memoirs, 1916-64 is written by vanity out of petty-mindedness. The opening starts with an untruth ('I fought the Treasury to a standstill'), continues with a wincing and pathetic account of Wilson's relationship with the Queen and ends with an unconvincing explanation of his ultimate resignation. All this in six and a half pages entitled 'prologue'. Words such as 'foreword' or 'preface', or even a long one like 'introduction' are, one feels, too unpretentious for 'Lord Rievaulx', who cannot resist a slippery formulation.

All the same, his recollections provide some morsels for thought. Wilson's formative influences as a child were Arthur Mee's encyclopaedia, the boy scouts and the Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924 – to which he was taken in the side-car of his father's motorbike (the famous photograph of him as a boy outside 10 Downing Street dates from that trip). His socialism stemmed from his region (his family and schoolteachers) and his father was one of the insecure middle-class and suffered two long periods of unemployment. Even so, Wilson joined the Liberals on arrival at Oxford, before discarding political affiliation as he strove to excel academically.

In 1940, when he was 24, Wilson was seconded into the cabinet office to help with manpower statistics. He stayed there for two years on the fringe of Churchill's team, once taking minutes of the prime minister's negotiations with de Gaulle. Thereafter, Wilson says, Churchill regarded him as one of 'his boys'. Perhaps. From the many other references to Churchill, we can at least be sure that Wilson *saw himself* as one of Churchill's boys.

Thus Wilson's mental horizons and social values were formed by the liberal mix of soft imperialism, progressive reform and traditional loyalty. A far more reactionary background than Kinnock's, it would seem. Yet unlike Kinnock today, Wilson was very much the representative of the Left as he led Labour into the 1960s. How is this paradox to be explained?

Wilson's cannot help but display his unalloyed craving for office. Canny, precocious and tremendously hard-working, he played the system for all it was worth and he would have provided radical answers if that is what 'the system' had really wanted. His combination of exceptional talent, absence of principle and total devotion to success is apparent in his memoirs. He had the ability to have been different if this had been insisted upon by those around him. So we should be cautious about the passionate disgust with which his name is spat out by many on the Right as well as the Left. He has been made into a scapegoat but his formation was exemplary not exceptional.

His programme was change in order all the better to stay the same, because this was the desire of country and party. In 1964, after 13 years of Conservative rule Wilson appealed to popular impatience with Tory failure – he looked back to a time when people were able to look forward. In this way he was able to drape the imagery of progress around nostalgia.

Such an approach, however, calls for a rooted hatred of ideas, rooted, that is, in the labour movement itself. Since the war there have been two attempts to provide the Labour Party with some ideological coherence – those associated with Hugh Gaitskell and Tony Benn. Both were repelled with a great shuddering and groaning. Wilson seemed to confirm his radicalism when he was one of the leading opponents of Gaitskell's efforts to discard nationalisation as a doctrine. But as he makes clear in his recollections of the episode, Wilson was no more for nationalisation than he was against it. The whole argument was 'daft'. Ideology, whether right or left, will get you nowhere. Every case must be judged on its 'practical' merits.

What did – and does – Wilson think, then? He who is now being strongly recommended to us as at least the most successful electoral leader in Labour's history, sums up his 50 years of political experience with these words: 'I consider that the best style of government is like rowing – the ideal solution is to get the boat along as quickly as possible without turning it over'.

Like all sporting analogies (Attlee drew his from cricket, Kinnock shows a preference for soccer) the rules of the game are presumed. What *direction* should the boat take? This was the issue at stake in the dispute with Gaitskell, as with Benn. Wilson opposed the former, which placed him on the 'Left' just as Kinnock's opposition to the latter has put him on the 'Right'. But neither deserve such epithets. What they share is a well-founded belief that they can row the boat, in the direction given.

It is interesting to compare Wilson's recollections to those of his contemporary Jack Jones, who led the Transport & General Workers' Union during the 70s and was the architect of the shop stewards movement. Jones writes well, and through the attractive modesty of his formulations his strength of purpose and commitment emerge very clearly.

But for different reasons he shares with Wilson a refusal to reflect upon his times, to argue out what happened and what could have happened to his country and his movement. In his book's early passages (which cover the time when he fought with the International Brigades in Spain) Jones describes how he learnt from practical experience. Later he contrasts his approach to that of 'intellectuals' like Harold Wilson who have no idea how to work *with* their own people (and to Richard Crossman who 'didn't know his arse from his elbow'). But at the end he describes an incident when he gave a speech about his vision of socialism and prime minister Callaghan leant over to Jones' wife and whispered with astonishment, 'Jack really means what he says!'

The point is evident. It is Jones not Wilson, the docker not the don, who is the real intellectual, committed to his ideas, fighting to have them implemented. Jack Jones sought genuine change according to his own values of working class democracy, by which he judged the system for himself: he set rather than received his direction. The trouble with the Labour Party is not that it seeks to be realistic but that it still takes its notion of 'practicality' from Wilson rather than from Jones. ●

Anthony Barnett

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Class Warriors

The Retreat from Class: A New 'True' Socialism
Ellen Meiksins Wood
Verso £6.95 pbk

Working Class Politics in Crisis: Essays on Labour and the State
Leo Panitch
Verso £6.95 pbk

Ellen Meiksins Wood's book is a recent instalment in the continuing saga in which the shining knights of 'class politics' take arms against assorted revisionists. Wood's chosen weapon is an orthodox, but not a crudely reductionist, marxism. The position and role of the working class as exploited collective producer makes it the only possible leading agent of a socialist politics. She concedes that politics does not arise spontaneously out of class position – and needs to be developed in struggle by parties and unions. Yet to be effective it must be grounded in the objective class contradictions of capitalism rather than in mere abstract conceptions.

Not so for the new revisionists. In their recent work, Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, Barry Hindess, Paul Hirst, Gavin Kitching and others have all severed this link between the working class and the socialist project, suggesting instead that socialism can only be constructed at the level of politics and ideology. They have disconnected socialism from class and have diluted what is left either into a socialism based on 'general interests' (ie class harmony) or a 'radical democracy' whose collective protagonist is a popular bloc of social forces and movements, with or without the organised working class.

Much of Wood's polemic is well-aimed. She is right, for instance, to censure Laclau and Mouffe for their recent 'dissolution of social reality into discourse'. Yet the ultimate message coming out of her book is a conservative and regressive one, in two respects. First, she applies classical marxist categories in a universal and abstract way, whereas the theoretical revisions of Poulantzas and Laclau were attempts to grapple with real historical situations and practices that simply did not fit those categories. They may in the end have erred too far in the direction of 'autonomising' politics and ideology, but they cannot just be 'corrected' by reaffirming that ideologies belong to classes or that politics reflects class interests.

Second, like other advocates of 'class politics', Wood tends to blur the difference between 'working class' and 'labour movement' and to suggest that they are really one and the same. But the fact is that the labour movement has frequently spoken for, but never directly embodied, the interests of the whole working class. It has conceded no real voice to the mass of women, whether at work or in the home, to black workers, the unemployed or the growing army of part-time and casualized workers.

Leo Panitch, a colleague of Ellen Wood's in the political science department at York University in Toronto, is likewise tough on revisionism. *Working Class Politics in Crisis* opens with a long polemical essay, which among other things criticises Eric Hobsbawm's call for a strategic truce inside the Labour Party and a broad anti-Thatcher popular front.

For Panitch the Labour Party, even when wearing the emperor's new clothes paraded by a media-conscious Kinnock and Hattersley, is historically and structurally, a top-heavy, corporatist party geared to winning elections and integrating classes under a national banner. He suggests that it is naive to think that labour can act in its present unreconstructed form as the centre of a popular alliance of new social forces.

Panitch's proposed remedies to the impasses of labourism are essentially those of the Bennite Left: radical extension of social ownership and control, constitutional reform, greatly increased accountability, and popular participation in decision-making.

While Panitch is sober enough about assessing the reasons behind Benn's failure in 1979-81 to win wide popular consensus for these measures or to overcome the deep entrenchment of elitist structures and practices within the party itself, he will have no truck with those, Hobsbawm among them, who lay a good part of the blame for the electoral debacle of 1983 on the political 'adventurism' of the Labour left. On the contrary, for Panitch it was at least as much the opposition to consititutional reform by most of the parliamentary leadership and its name-calling and hounding of the Left which brought the party as a whole into discredit in the eyes of many voters.

Panitch is a sharp political analyst, and it is perhaps not his fault that essays written even as little as five years ago now sound distinctly dated. His politics is based around activating a socialist consciousness among a class located in the workplace. But what happens to this politics in the face of the massive growth of unemployment, poverty, restructuring and the low-wage economy that characterise the present phase? Not to mention – and Panitch does not – a politics based around not exclusively class issues: feminism, the anti-nuclear movement, peace. ●

David Forgacs

Moribund Militant

The March of Militant
Michael Crick
Faber and Faber £4.95 pbk

In the White House, they're worried. A party is on the verge of taking power in one of the most strategically important countries in Europe. It is pledged to remove nuclear weapons from its territory, to impose sanctions on South Africa. Even more worrying is its recently acquired inability to tell lies about what it can realistically do about the economy, despite well-established precedents that calling a lie a 'demand' or a 'slogan' koshers it. No problem, Mr President, the firm's got a brilliant idea. We'll unleash entrism on them, guaranteed to have the party turning in on itself.

Of course it's just a paranoid fantasy worthy of the comrades of Militant itself, but it does defy rational explanation that Labour's national executive committee has spent session after session this year dealing with a sub-Trotskyist sect. In this new edition of his book *Militant*, Michael Crick clearly establishes the moral justification for acting against a body whose self-declared aim is to infiltrate the Labour Party and take it over, or split and destroy it in the process. It takes the moral ground totally from under the feet of those who repeatedly stood up in public and claimed that it was 'just a newspaper'. He adds a new insight into the 'Liverpool connection', the disastrous blunders made by the Tendency there, and the way Neil Kinnock seized the initiative in dealing with them.

The papers first unearthed by a *World in Action* team, the Revolutionary socialist League's constitution and minutes from its early days, form an appendix to the book, documenting that the 'just a newspaper' was in fact far more than that. Naturally Peter Taaffe, who figures in the documents himself, looked the tv cameras in the lens and denied their reality. But then ignoring reality has been one of the less endearing, if more enduring, of the tendency's habits all along.

This Trotspotter's Wisden documents and explains the changes in the central committee, the changes in policies, the changes in the numbers and nature of Militant's membership. Like the first edition it will be the definitive reference work on the

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Tendency.

As before, Crick makes a bunch of inherently dull and dour people interesting, which has more to do with his literary skills than any lilt in the slogans of the comrades. But it would take a work of literature, a modern *Darkness at Noon*, to explain the motivations of the individuals involved. How a combination of the devotion of the Moonies, the hierarchies of the Scientologists, the secrecy of the Masons, and the directness of the Mafia could motivate otherwise honest and committed people poses a moral problem of more than local relevance to the nature of socialism.

Crick's conclusion is, from an orthodox Labour view, pessimistic. The Militant's march, though faltering a little, has not yet been halted.' But he quotes NUPE official, Tom Sawyer, as someone who'd re-examined his ideas of socialism as a result of his experiences of Militant, and Sawyer is not alone. Politically, the Tendency can only survive in a milieu in which sloganised certainty substitutes for analysis. Their testing of such simplicities to destruction has made many people reconsider their lip service to the slogans by which leftness is usually measured. The rise, for example, of Derek Hatton has shown, yet again, how a conspiratorial and democratic centralist organisation can be hi-jacked by those of less than pure motives.

In the end, Militant, by negative example, has provided a great impetus to realignment, to a redefinition of leftness. The attack on them by left wingers Michael Meacher, Eric Clarke and Margaret Beckett demonstrates the shaky ideological cohesion on which the Campaign Group's 'hardness' rests. For Militant to remain after such an attack shows that expediency rather than ideology is their watchword.

While Crick is properly pessimistic about the prospects for the success of explusions *per se*, the fact that Militant is now under *political* attack, from those behind whom they have traditionally sheltered, is far more significant. Equally the fission of the expedient facade of Left unity enables a democratic left position to consolidate itself.

Militant's own documents demonstrate their awareness from the beginning of their entrist career, that their major enemy is the non-centralist, non-trotskyist Left.

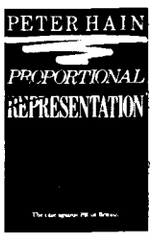
Their slogans have all along been destructively aimed to 'expose' the 'Tribunites'. But such 'exposure' required the consent and co-operation of the victim to work. Since the witch-hunted showed their hands as heresy-hunters during their regime in Liverpool, even the short-memoried left will have difficulty co-operating.

Militant may well be around for a long time, but it will be a lingering decline, as a dying force trying to live down the memories of its political debâcle in Liverpool. But in its moribundity, it may remind the Left that socialism is about many things – including honesty. It depends on informed consent, not misinformed coercion ●

Ian Williams

Fair Enough?

Proportional Misrepresentation
Peter Hain
Wildwood House £5.95 pbk



It is good to see an opponent come forward with arguments that engage with some of the real issues raised by proportional representation, such as accountability and the role of local communities, rather than rely upon simple appeals to party self-interest.

Peter Hain deserves credit for applying himself where others believe that stony silence is the best policy. He concedes that arguments about fairness are on PR's side – an important concession in the light of Labour's attempt to claim this virtue as its own – and indicates that he is prepared to accept the 'alternative vote' in domestic elections (where votes would be transferred until one candidate has an overall majority) and the single transferable vote (STV) with multi-member constituencies in elections to the European parliament.

It would no doubt be unduly mischievous of me to suggest that this might be Hain's negotiating position for a post-election discussion, where electoral reform will be one of the key Alliance demands. It will certainly have its attractions for those who have been working long and hard to achieve such a breakthrough. Alliance leaders will need to be extremely convincing when they explain why they turned it down.

Hain's argument could usefully be stripped of the guilt by association which he throws at PR, even though much of it is informative. It simply isn't reasonable to rule out a policy on the grounds that David Owen favours it, though I agree that the conversion of the SDP leadership to enthusiasm for PR is one of the most impressive of the decade.

But this is not all. Hain goes on to accuse PR of association with both corporatist stability *and* Israeli-like instability. In attempting to show that the whole spectrum has got it wrong, he is in danger of painting himself into a tight corner.

Stripped down, Hain's concern is firstly with the intimacy of the single-member constituency which could be lost in the monster constituencies of STV; secondly for the influence of constituency political parties which he sees as an important force for accountability, and thirdly with the unrepresentative nature of coalitions, which allow politicians, he says, to abandon manifestos with impunity. As he says, 'there is considerable merit in the argument that governments should win a majority of votes, but this should be placed in perspective.'

For myself, I am not so entranced by the romanticism of the MP as social worker, fighting mainly a geographical interest. There would be considerable advantages in enabling voters to contact a member they supported rather than (as under first-past-the-post) forcing the majority to be represented by someone they oppose. I am also looking forward to the day when there is dialogue between, as well as within, political parties, since this may force politicians to talk real politics and release them from the sterile Westminster agenda. The habit of adversarial posturing does stunt any political creativity that might be around.

A representative system which more closely reflected shifts in opinion would produce better government and give every incentive to politicians to build support for their positions. If a party made itself unpopular by conceding too much in order to enjoy the delights of government, as Hain assumes most would do, it would presumably pay a price at subsequent elections.

The essential political and democratic case seems to me to be clear. It rests not on fairness but on the imperatives of pluralism and the empowering of the individual voter with an equal say in the political system. Hain provides us with a final chapter which suggests a number of other reforms (such as reform of parliament and decentralisation) which are meant to put the clamour for electoral reform in the democratic shade. I can accept that some of the claims made by PR's more insistent proponents, that – it is the only route to national prosperity and so on – are rather wild. But the essential point remains, the parameters of party competition will be widened and not restricted by PR. Electoral reform has now become one of the essential preconditions for the democratic revolution that this country needs ●

Alan Leaman

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Political Megastar

CLR James' meticulous class analysis sometimes obscures the black perspective and analysis of racism which one would expect from a man of his history and experience. But his intellect, breadth of interests and sheer longevity make CLR James one of the political megastars of this century.

CLR James, His Life and Work edited by *Paul Buhle Allison & Busby £5.95 pbk.* offers a fascinating collection of critiques, reviews and speculations about James' life and work. The jigsaw spans his influence and involvement in African, American, European and Caribbean politics, as well as his output as a fiction and sports writer.

Indeed it's as James the cricket writer that his political analysis comes across best. **Cricket** *Allison & Busby £14.95 hbk.* is a collection of his writings on the subject. For James, to analyse cricket is to analyse the class nature of British society and one of the symbols of colonialism. A comment made in 1957 sums it up: 'By cricket I mean not only the game but the code connected with it'. ●

Trevor Carter

Women world-wide

Women in the World: an international atlas by *Joni Seager and Ann Olson Pan £7.95 pbk.* gives a pretty but impressionistic view of women's lives world-wide, reducing reality to maps and numbers. Some interesting correlations emerge; seclusion and early marriages occurring in countries where there is no sex tourism or beauty queen contests.

But when women's oppressions and freedoms vary so fundamentally throughout the world perhaps any attempt to quantify and compare across cultures will provoke the banal. An example: 'high status' is attributed to women in the West, while 'unknown status' is attributed to those in the USSR.

Women in the World may be useful for highlighting some less complex points, but it is a disappointing depiction of women's many varied lives. ●

Haleh Afshar

Body Packaging

The Conran of cosmetics, Anita Roddick, founder of The Body Shop has in 10 years created one of the most successful franchise businesses of the 80s. In **The Body Shop** by *G Mackay* and *A Corke Pan*, Anita Rodderick's story is told. Or as she puts it: 'Natural' products, no animal testing, no advertising, and a refusal to 'create false needs by playing on women's fears of lost beauty'.

But part of the Body Shop's success is that it plays on our distrust of the glossy sophistication of cosmetic companies, while relying on their advertising to create demand for its beauty products.

Yet environmentally concerned and successful is a great thing to be. The charm of the 'natural' is enhanced by attractive packaging, constant product development, sophisticated merchandising and creative PR – producing a dynamic retail concept with enormous appeal.

As a book **The Body Shop** won't tell you *how* it's been done – or about the 'hard' details of franchising and finance. Glossy descriptions of the business's development make it clear that Anita Roddick is a zealous entrepreneur with a superb feel for hype. It's no wonder that a book about her reads like an over-long press release. ●

Catherine Luyster

Vines and Wines

Just as winemakers are tempted to increase the alcohol level of their product by adding sugar (or worse), so wine writers too often fall into the trap of a language larded with pretentious and inappropriate adjectives. Not so, I'm glad to say, *Jancis Robinson*, best known for her path-breaking tv series on wine.

Vines, Grapes and Wines *Mitchell Beazley £16.95 hbk.* is, astonishingly, the first comprehensive English-language survey of the most important material element in the make-up of a particular wine – the grape variety or varieties used by the grower. Beside this, the 'south-facing slope', 'vigneron's craft' or 'flinty soil' so beloved of traditional wine writers is of minor importance.

Informatively but with a light touch, Jancis Robinson takes us through both the famous varieties which make up the great wines of France and also hundreds of lesser, but equally interesting, grape types used elsewhere in France, other European countries and wherever else wine is made and enjoyed, from China to Sussex. ●

Stephen Hayward

Child Sexploitation

Judith Ennew's **The Sexual Exploitation of Children,** *Polity Press £5.95 pbk* and *Alice Miller's* **'Thou Shalt Not Be Aware': society's betrayal of the child** *Pluto £5.95 pbk* both tackle the increasingly publicised subject of child sexual abuse. Psychoanalyst Alice Miller rightly challenges some of the basic tenets of orthodox psycho-analytic theory (such as the drive and Oedipus theories) which have dominated in a very negative way our perception and handling of sexual abuse this century. The book promises a radical reappraisal of approaches to child sexuality. But Miller's deep roots in those same psycho-analytic modes of thought, and her esoteric meandering into, among others, Kafka's psyche makes for heavy reading.

As a result some valid points, such as our reluctance to face up to the abused child's rage, lose their impact. Sadly 'Thou Shalt Not Be Aware' is destined to gather dust on the shelves of academics and psychiatrists.

Judith Ennew's **The Sexual Exploitation of Children** is, in contrast, succinct and informative. She covers a wide range of child sexual abuse, including prostitution and pornography, making comprehensive use of both historical and cross-cultural material.

Stressing children's position of powerlessness within the family, Ennew makes no apologies for the fact that her book is as much about power as sex. Her argument that child sexual abuse is an extreme manifestation of prevailing social and sexual values is credible but very uncomfortable.

Contradictory views of child sexuality exist side by side in our society; we see children as total innocents, while also possessing a strong sensuality. In fact I think it is true to say that, while children have an awareness of pleasurable body sensations, to equate this with adult sexuality is to attempt to excuse and rationalise our exploitation of them.

The Sexual Exploitation of Children raises difficult, complex questions to which there are no easy answers. Nevertheless, answers must be urgently found both to prevent the continued abuse of children and to give children the rights they so clearly need. ●

Kath Parr

A Proud Past

John Gorman's **Banner Bright: An Illustrated History of Trade Union Banners** *Scorpion £19.50 hbk/£9.95 pbk* shows the often proud, but also poignant, face of the British labour movement past. Here the 'apostle of British socialism', Keir Hardie, is born aloft by the miners of Heworth colliery. Made to celebrate the nationalisation of the coal industry, the banner now lies at rest in a museum.

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with Jean Coussins

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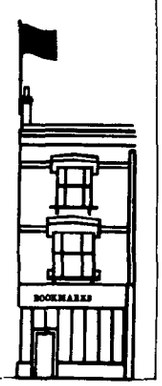

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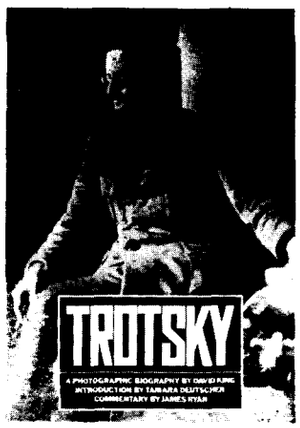
BLACKWELL

Trotsky
DAVID KING
Introduction by
Tamara Deutscher
Commentary by
James Ryan



This book follows the dramatic events which took Trotsky from his birthplace in a small Ukrainian village to the head of the world's first workers' state and then, as Stalin slowly strangled the revolution, through opposition, persecution and exile to his assassination in Mexico city.

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UPDATE

PEACE MOVES

After the Icelandic summit Update yourself on the peace movement in all its different forms.

CND conference
A selection from the 100 meetings at Blackpool Winter Gardens, Nov 15-16. Open to observers.
☛Details Martin Jones 01-250 4010.

Making Coalitions
Speakers include Ken Livingstone, Dafydd Elis Thomas MP and Martin Jacques.

CND and the political parties
Is there a clash between the interests of the peace movement and those of the political parties which support some or all of its policies?

CND and the nuclear power movement
Speakers from CND, the trades unions and George Pritchard from Greenpeace.

A New Wind from the East
Gorbachev's impact both inside the Soviet Union and on its foreign policy will be examined by Joan Ruddock, Gerard Holden and others.

Talking Sanity
A series of debates on implementing nuclear disarmament in Britain. 'The peace movements and a disarming government': Ken Livingstone, Clare Short and Bruce Kent; Nov 24, Camden Town Hall.
☛Details Colin James 01-250 4010.

Peace Tax Campaign
Dr Richard Lawson, a GP and Green Party councillor calls on GPs to join in support of a test ban treaty.
☛Details Richard Lawson 0934 835140.

Left Unlimited
Denis Healey debates with Fedor Burlatsky, editor of *Liturnaya Gazeta*, – preference to weekend ticket holders, so book now!

NEWS

Nancy Astor Luncheon
To commemorate the entry of the first woman into the House of Commons in 1919- Nancy Astor. Organised by the 300 Group
☛Details 01-734 3457.

A Night for the People of South Africa
Tim Curry, the Communards, David Hare, Hanif Kureishi and many more brought together by War on Want to aid refugees in the front-line states.
Nov 16.
☛Shaftesbury Theatre, London WC2.

AIDS – a Trade Union Issue
The London Strategic Policy Unit has produced an information pack to be used by trade unionists dealing with problems associated with AIDS.
☛Details from 15 Highstone Mansions, 84 Camden Rd, London NW1.

Marxism Today continues to expand and we need volunteer staff to help with merchandising and design. You will receive expenses and play a full and active part in every aspect of the magazine. Many thanks to Lawrence Budge, Dan Glaister, Don Redding and John Scott for their help on this issue.
☛Contact Jane Critchley 01-608 0265.

MEETINGS

Against the Burnings
Chile Solidarity meeting with Veronica de Negri – mother of youth burnt to death by Chilean troops – Denis Healey, Alan Beith MP and others.
Oct 30, 7.30, Conway Hall, London.

The Politics of Mental Health
Annual conference of the Socialist Health Association.
Nov 8, 10.30-4pm
☛Details 01-703 6838.

There is an Alternative
Day seminar on formulating an alternative benefits system. Speakers include Ron Smith, Peter Essam and Joan Brown (PSI).
Nov 24, 9.30-4.30
☛Details Camden Action on Benefits 01-831 6734.

Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture
Robert Brenner, winner of the 1985 Isaac Deutscher Prize will talk on 'The Autonomy of the State?'.
Nov 26, 7.30 pm.
☛London School of Economics.

New Food Politics
A full menu of the contemporary issues in food politics.
Nov 29.
☛Details from the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science 01-607 9615.

Islington Remembers Spain
A evening of discussion and music to mark the part played by Islington in the Civil War. Nov 20, 7.30
☛Red Rose Club, Seven Sisters Rd N4.

Britain at the Crossroads
Child Poverty Action Group conference with Buchi Emecheta, Malcom Wicks and Ken Livingstone.
Nov 8, 10.30-3.15, ULU, Malet St, London WC1.
☛Details 01-242 3225.

Local Strategies for Work
The first national conference. Speakers: David Blunkett, Margaret Hodge, Rodney Bickerstaffe and others. Nov 14-15.
☛Details: CLES Heron Hse, Brazennose St, Manchester M2.

PUBLICATIONS

Peace Through Non-Alignment
Ben Lowe on British withdrawal from NATO. *Verso* £150.

Peace by Chris Sewell
An easy to read introduction to the issues of peace and the campaigns for civil rights and disarmament. *Spokesman* £2.50.

Hard Cash
A report by Change and War on Want on the damaging effects of racism and sexism on the aid agencies and how to combat them.

Black Woman
A monthly magazine from the perspective of anti-racist, anti-sexist, class-conscious women will be launched in November 1986.
☛Details *Black Woman* 01-608 0447.

ANC Anniversary Calendar
To mark the 75th anniversary of the ANC a wall calendar based on the Freedom Chater by artist Ruth Carneson is now available as well as greetings cards in the same design. Calendars £3. Greetings cards with envelopes £1, available from ANC, PO Box 38, 28 Penton St, London N1 9PR.

Part-Time Workers
One in every five workers now works part-time, the vast majority of whom are women. This booklet examines the situation and sets out legal rights and an approach for the unions. Available from Labour Research Dept., 78 Blackfriars Rd, London SE1. £1.

Critical Mess
The latest issue of Third World First's quarterly magazine examines the real costs of global nuclearisation. £1.50.

VIDEOS

Moving Away From Home
A video resource pack from Shelter for young people.
☛Details 01-633 9377.

Northern Newsreel No 3
The main feature on this half-hour bulletin is on the Fowler Review plus items on the MSC and regular features.
☛Details: Northern Newsreel, 36 Bottle Bank, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE8 2AR.

Open Eye Catalogue
Videotape catalogue now available – on women and trade unions, international issues and media representations – and other work.
☛Details 90-92 Whitechapel, Liverpool L1 6EN.

Who's Next For Privatisation . . .?
A video record of a campaign by local authority and hospital workers against private contractors in the North East. Available from: 5 Side (Rear), Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 3JE.

Entries for the December Update should be sent to the office by November 4. For information: tel Nick Mirzoeff on 01-673 3450. Please try to ensure you give details of disabled access.

CONTRIBUTORS

This month's contributors include:
Jon Bloomfield is a member of CND's international committee and of the Communist Party's executive committee.
Barbara Rogers edits *Everywoman* magazine. She has has written several books on Southern Africa.
Jeff Ferry is a London-based American newspaper correspondent.
Virendra Sharma is an Ealing councillor and ethnic minorities officer for the Labour Party.
Tony Levene is a freelance financial journalist.
Jackie Wills is a freelance writer.
Beatrix Campbell is a journalist on *City Limits* magazine and she is currently completing a book called *The Iron Ladies* to be published by Virago next year.
Gerard Holden is a research officer at Sussex University's Science Policy Research Unit.
Eric Hobsbawm was formerly Professor of Economic and Social History at Birkbeck College, London and is a member of *Marxism Today*'s editorial board.
Gareth Stedman Jones is the author of *Languages of Class* and *Outcast London*.
John Grahl is a lecturer in economics at Queen Mary College, London and a member of the Communist Party's economic committee.
Bob Rowthorn is a member of *Marxism Today's* editorial board. He is Reader in economics at Cambridge University.
For **Mainstream** roundtable participants see p36.
Steve Vines is a journalist on *The Observer*. He was previously a freelance journalist specialising in Middle East affairs and secretary of the Labour Party NEC's Middle East sub-committee.
Nick Newman is a freelance writer who interviewed Nigel Mansell in Austria earlier this year.
Michelene Wandour is a playwright.
Victoria Wood is an actress and commedienne. Her series *Victoria Wood As Seen On TV* starts this month.
Rosalind Brunt lectures in communication and women's studies at Sheffield Polytechnic and is a member of *Marxism Today*'s editorial board.
David Berry is a freelance writer.
Stuart Cosgrove writes for the *New Musical Express*.
Janie Glen teaches in adult education and is a member of the Communist Party executive committee.
Anthony Barnett is the author of *Iron Britannia*.
David Forgacs edited *Rethinking Italian Fascism* (Lawrence and Wishart, 1986) and is a member of the Communist Party's theory and ideology committee.
Ian Williams is a member of the Liverpool Labour Party and northern correspondent of the *New Statesman*.
Alan Leaman is a member of the Liberal Party's standing policy committee.
Hywel Francis is chair of the Wales Congress in Support of Mining Communities and also chairs the Welsh Communist Party's energy and mining advisory committee.
Joan Smith is a freelance journalist.

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COMMENT

An Act of Avoidance

I must respond to Raphael Samuel's contribution (*Marxism Today*, September) on the miners because of its historical inaccuracies, its suspect analysis and essentially *anti-communist* tone, outlook and content. Underlining it all is a brash metropolitanism which does not address itself to the reality of the strike and its aftermath.

Even the small errors are revealing and give some clues as to the shakiness of the contribution. Firstly, there is no such organisation as 'The South Wales Campaign for the Defence of the Coal Communities'. The correct title is 'The Wales Congress in Support of Mining Communities'. It was not set up on the initiative of the Communist Party but by the South Wales Area NUM leadership. Party members have however played a prominent role in its work and its strategy of building a broad democratic alliance is clearly the approach of the CP's programme, The *British Road to Socialism*.

Secondly there is the question of Michael McGahey. He was not the chairman at the party congress in 1985. It was George Bolton although it is perhaps forgiveable and understandable that Raphael Samuel should confuse them. McGahey's role in the congress was limited because he was still recovering from the physical attack made upon him at the end of the strike. He was therefore from time to time absent but he *did* make a contribution on the miners' strike (there was no specific debate as Samuel suggests).

But much the worst implied inaccuracy is that Michael McGahey is somehow manipulated against his will to obey some party line or other on such matters as analysing the strike or the *Morning Star*. That betrays an incredible ignorance of the man and his party. Michael McGahey is a communist, and as such he constantly emphasises the importance of analysing problems scientifically, of the need for a *Communist* daily newspaper (in the style that Lenin described in his famous letter to Tom Bell) and always argues for the need for collective responsibility - one of his favourite ways of describing 'left adventurists' is to label them 'dilettante' for not accepting collective decisions.

Most of all he takes pride in being an intellectual, in the mould of other Communist miners' leaders before him - Les Ellis, Horner, Paynter, The Kanes and the Moffats - who were never afraid of proposing unpopular solutions for the tackling of difficult problems. That is why at the recent NUM annual conference he said in the debate on unity:

'I joined this industry in 1939. It was two years after Spencerism. There were Spencerites around. But we had to build that unity that created the conditions for the creation of the National Union of Mineworkers in 1945. I would remind you, had those compromises - yes - compromises - not taken place - we would not have had the National Union of Mineworkers . . . Be careful - the approach of certain of my colleagues whom I respect very much could create the conditions . . . for non-unionism in the industry. It's a question of *how* we campaign . . .

We need one united union in this industry. We need it not only for the miners, we need it for the political unity of the movement. We need it to secure a Labour victory at the next election. We need it to defeat Thatcherism.'

This brings us to the two main criticisms of Samuel: the inter-related questions of the role of the Communist Party and the meaning of unity. The Communist Party still stands for unity of the miners and of the whole movement. That is why from the earliest days of the strike it identified the need to work out strategies to achieve the unity of *all* miners, the unity of the miners with the wider movement and the winning over of public opinion.

These were essential preconditions for any progress in the struggle. The very fact that the party publicly identified these problems and continued to do so after the strike is not a reason for alleging that the party created them! The same can be said of *Marxism Today*. My view (which is obviously not detached - but then again neither is Samuel) is that during and after the strike proper attention *was given* to the real issues of the strike. There were roundtable discussions on women, on strategy and on the lessons as well as long and short articles which attempted some constructive criticism and analysis. It has always been the view of the Communist Party and many others in the labour movement that we cannot maintain, build or rebuild unity on silence, on 'loyalty' an on an uncritical view of leadership. Yet this is the approach which underpins all of Samuel's contribution.

When Des Dutfield, the new president of the South Wales miners and a prominent Labour Party member, addressed his first annual conference this year he made some very perceptive comments concerning *how* unity could be rebuilt upon long-standing and obvious democratic practices:-

'I will expect the opinions and the viewpoints of our members through our lodges to be reflected as accurately and sincerely as possible . . . It is of great importance that these views be expressed whether they appear to be supportive, contentious, unpopular or downright unpalatable at times . . . Silent acceptance on certain crucial questions is not satisfactory . . . I give you my word that you will receive the proper respect, when declaring your lodges' position on such issues and you will also receive all the assistance you may require in presenting your views.'

Such an honest outlook, informed as it is by the real world, is what the Communist Party and *Marxism Today* has tried to adopt, obviously not always successfully, but it has tried.

Mick McGahey – facing facts

In this view, if Arthur Scargill says, as he did in his 1986 annual address, that the 1937 settlement which ended the breakaway in Nottinghamshire created a 'false unity', then he must be publicly challenged. That is opinion not historical analysis: he and others would do well to read and re-read Page Arnot's official history of the period to get an understanding of the appalling problems and very real achievements of those times.[1] The unity which ultimately resulted in all the improvements under early nationalisation and then in 1972 and 1974 was achieved not simply through industrial action alone: this anti-intellectual posturing on the Left which, Mussolini-like, demands at all times action *instead of thought* (rather than both) is of course a fairly recent phenomenon. Will Paynter called it a fetish.

I find it wholly misleading for Samuel to suggest that the thoughtful and incisive close-up of Michael McGahey by Don MacIntyre (*MT* September 1986) was in

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any way divisive. Samuel suffers from the old stalinist trait of describing leaders as 'towering figures' who must at all costs not be criticised. No doubt Michael McGahey would be the first to agree with another 'towering figure', James Larkin: 'The great appear great because we are on our knees: let us rise.'

This constant canonisation or deification of left leaders (the worst example is of Arthur Cook who, if the truth were told, was not a 'fighter-to-the- finish' at all as even a cursory scrutiny of 1921 and 1926 reveals). This need for inventing 'great leaders' is necessary for the authoritarian Right but on the Left we should be extremely wary of this lionising of past and present 'heroes'. Paynter hated it and constantly worked against such fawning tendencies.

Finally, I would like to make a few points about unity and this strange notion that on the Left there must be only critism of the Right. It may sound 'revisionist' but I no longer subscribe to the old left-right divide (I do not think many of the early broad left leaders in the NUM did either - how else would we have had the unity of 1972 and 1974?). Two of the greatest problems which beset the labour movement today are racism and sexism - and I do not think that the Left is necessarily any less immune to them than the Right. The 'hard Left' has a third weakness: a rabid intolerance of other views within the movement.

Beyond this I believe that our understanding of unity in recent years has become flawed and the miners' strike did not help matters. Shortly before he died Will Paynter said that he, and others in the early formulations of the broad Left, worked out a seemingly simple strategy which we need to reflect on today: the building of a left-right unity on a left programme.

Those strident voiced badge-festooned Oxford lefties (elsewhere, Kim Howells has called them 'Clapham colliers') should also reflect on the fact that it is the so-called Right which won the key ballot victories for the NUM against the UDM in Leicester and North Wales. They way we work out that strategy for unity has as much to do with form as it has with content. Norman Willis, at a recent South Wales miners' residential school, talked of the need for leaders to stop 'assuming' the loyalty of their members and of the need also to stop 'demanding' solidarity: listening is more important than preaching.

We should welcome a debate on the Communist Party and on unity within the movement. The opportunities for unity for the miners and the whole movement are better now than for some time particularly with the passing of the amended Scottish resolution on unity at the NUM annual conference which calls for one union for the miners *as a first priority* and projects an energy workers' alliance. Allied to this are the extremely important decisions on energy policy taken at the TUC and the Labour Party.

This is the context within which a debate should now take place. Unfortunately Raphael Samuel's contribution does not address itself to these questions facing miners and their families - which they themselves have never stopped debating and discussing particularly now that their disunity is having such a debilitating impact on their wages, their conditions, their industry and their communities.

If we do not seize the new opportunities for unity before us, history will never forgive us. The time for left posturing is over. The time for thinking through our problems has only just begun. Out of it all we may get not a miners' charter but, an energy workers' charter, implemented by the next Labour government. ●

Hywel Francis

1 R Page Arnot: *The Miners in Crisis and War* volume 3 of the official history of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (Allen and Unwin, 1961). See in particular the chapters on 'The Campaign against Company Unions' and 'A Single Union'.

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Chile Solidarity public meeting with Veronica de Negri (mother of youth burnt to death by chilean troops) Denis Healey M.P., Alan Beith M.P., (Liberal Foreign Affairs Spokesperson), Thursday 30th October 7.30 p.m. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Nearest tube Holborn. Chile Solidarity Campaign 01-272 4298.

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Duke Hussey

A few days into the bitter dispute which followed the move of all the Murdoch newspapers to Wapping, an official car drew up in Grays Inn Road. The tall man who got out was greeted cordially by some of the pickets camped outside the former *Times* and *Sunday Times* buildings, most of them sacked print workers; he came over and chatted briefly to them, saying 'Hello, how are you?'

What is remarkable about his exchange is that the man in the car was Duke Hussey, then still a director of Times Newspapers and the man who, as chief executive and managing director, played a key role during the 11-month shutdown of the two papers in the late 1970s. A more obvious target for trade union ire would be hard to find. Yet Hussey is probably the only senior management figure whose appearance after Wapping did not automatically provoke the wrath of the pickets.

There is perhaps a clue revealed by this incident that the new chairman of the BBC may not be the man to effect the radical overhaul of public broadcasting that many on the Tory right wing might have hoped for. The BBC is one of the few key institutions to have resisted the onslaught of Thatcherism with any degree of success. A mark of its achievement is the anger that some of its drama and current affairs programmes excites on the Right, and the frequency with which calls for its commercialisation are made.

Lord King, the abrasive and Thatcherite chairman of British Airways, was widely tipped to take on the role of BBC revolutionary. Duke Hussey is of a different mould – a paternalist, happier to operate in the traditional corridors of power than in the brisk winds of the free market.

Duke Hussey's relative popularity with print union members, is an important key to understanding a man who might otherwise appear contradictory and enigmatic. So are his close establishment links.

During Harry Evans's stormy editorship of *The Times*, one of his most controversial innovations was placing a caricature on the paper's court page. Although this may seem a pretty minor move, the reaction was predictable. Letters of complaint poured in; Evans learned that Lord Drogheda, one of the national directors, had complained to Murdoch.

Evans was braced for a storm. Just then, Duke Hussey intervened. 'Funnily enough', he said, 'I saw Queen Elizabeth's private secretary Martin Gilliat at dinner last night and he is a very avid and discerning reader of *The Times* – as is his boss! I asked him what he thought about the court page and the cartoonist and he was very enthusiastic. So I don't think you need worry about those letters'.

The point of these stories is, of course, that Marmaduke James Hussey is a quintessential, polite member of the British establishment. People who know him describe him as affable, not pompous; one former union official from Times Newspapers remembers him as 'a pleasant chap, jolly, fairly straightforward'. A gentleman of the old school, in fact. Nor does his relative obscurity until his appointment to the BBC – until then, he was a little known figure outside the national newspaper industry, despite successfully chairing the profitable radio station Great Western Radio – matter at all.

It is precisely those people whose names mean nothing to the average person in the street who wield the most insidious type of power in establishment circles. You may not have heard of Hussey, just as you may not have heard of the Queen Mother's private secretary, but that doesn't make them any the less significant. And Hussey's connections, which derive largely from his marriage, are very good indeed.

He comes from a fairly standard upper middle-class background: son of a former colonial civil servant, educated at Rugby and Trinity College, Oxford. His war service was spent in the Grenadier Guards, where his courage was not in doubt (he lost a leg, and suffered great pain, after being wounded at Anzio).

But then, in a curious parallel with the former editor of the *Sunday Times*, Frank Giles, he married into the aristocracy. His wife, Lady Susan Katharine Hussey, is the fifth daughter of the 12th Earl Waldegrave; her *Who's Who* entry describes her occupation, without irony, as 'Woman of the Bedchamber to the Queen, since 1960'.

More recently, Lady Susan had a hand in grooming Lady Diana Spencer before her marriage to the Prince of Wales, and is godmother to Prince William. During one of the many disputes at Times Newspapers, Hussey telephoned print union leaders to say he had good news. But instead of a new offer, he wanted to keep them up to date with the latest royal birth.

Lady Susan is also the link in Hussey's only known political connection – she is the elder sister of William Waldegrave, the dampish junior environment minister. Other than this, his political leanings can only be surmised form his background, and from his track record at Times Newspapers. It may be his reputation there, as the man who stood up to the print unions by closing down the papers for 11 months, that explains why he was the prime minister's first choice for the BBC job.

But two caveats must be entered here. The first is that the shutdown failed. The second is that the little that is known about the 63-year-old Hussey suggests that his Toryism is likely to be of the consensus, not conflict, variety.

That this is so may lie behind the vigour with which the new chairman has been attacked by the *Daily Telegraph*, whose leader writer judged his credentials to be 'unlikely to command respect on the upper floors of Television Centre, where a firm hand is so badly needed'. It is difficult, the leader went on, 'to cast him as the strong man hewing a path to Thatcherite rectitude'.

Duke Hussey: Well connected

This is not to say that Hussey's appointment to the most powerful post in the BBC is anything to be pleased about. But the Corporation has at least been spared Lord King. And, according to one trade union leader, there is a glimmer of hope.

Hussey, according to this analysis, embodies all the characteristics of a product of the British establishment, including that of not being an intellectual: 'Mrs Thatcher may think he is a medium through which messages can be passed. He'll get the message at a dinner party, and carry it along to the BBC. But then he can be persuaded by the more cogent arguments of a governors' meeting. The trouble with putty is that it bears the imprint of the last finger that touched it'. ●

Joan Smith

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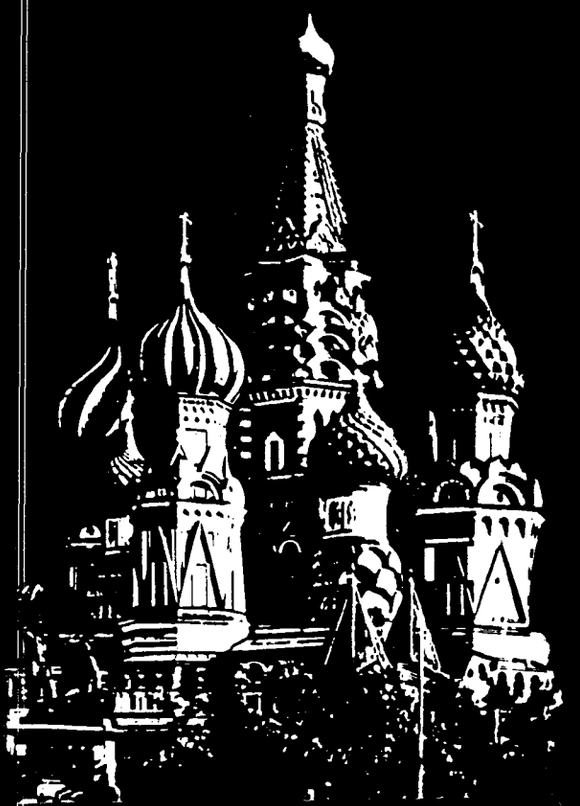

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